The sky over the bus station
is mustard yellow
& greasy. 4:00, a Sunday
afternoon in March
I was happy to be carrying
my red suitcase again
walking up Rue St. Denis
on my own two feet.
One wonders about women
who have come away alone
from a bus station
& carry their own suitcase.
Unseemly, as if a cab driver
should be putting it in the trunk
while she settles herself
in the back seat, snapping open
her powder compact
to check her teeth and hair
crossing silky knees
& lighting up a Belvedere.
I didn't have far to go
only 3 blocks, a little dizzy
from the diesel air &
tired, not from walking alone
With my suitcase
but with an embarrassment
as old as history—
the desire to explain
to that grinning punk
In the black Mustang
that this is what I chose.

Sharon Thesen; *from* "Radio New France Radio"

University of Alberta

Towards a Poetics of the Female Flâneur: Textual Flânerie in the Works of Solvej Balle, Kirsten Thorup and Daphne Marlatt

By Thea Claire Bowering

©

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Abstract:

In this thesis I compare the prose of Danish and Canadian contemporary experimental women writers—Kirsten Thorup, Solvej Balle, and Daphne Marlatt—to establish a poetics of female, textual flânerie. I define this poetics as a restless movement in form, found in stories about solitary, marginalized, wandering, urban women. I argue that the female flâneur's spatial practices cannot be separated from linguistic events. This challenges an assumption embedded in Walter Benjamin's and Charles Baudelaire's canonical work on the flâneur: that the shocking urban image is a pure event that disrupts ideologies within systems of power. With the poetics of Erin Mouré, Gail Scott, and Daphne Marlett (and by extension Charles Olson and the New French Feminists) I argue that *flânerie-in-the-feminine* recognizes that the Law of the Polis (exclusionary forms of discourse) inhabits *all of us*, and must be subverted by a self-conscious, open-ended writing practice. In this way, I extend the project of modernist flânerie into post-modern feminist discourse.

For mum, Angela Bowering

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Introduction: Flânerie-in-the-Feminine

one might say that writing is writing is writing in order to emphasize that it is, in fact, writing. When it is accepted as such the first sentence becomes an arrival, foot set in the word world.

Warren Tallman[1]

Because the flâneur has managed to elude any precise definition as a social or literary type he continues to be an effective organizing metaphor for avant-garde vision in the ongoing project of modernity. In contemporary experimental fiction he has come to function as a metaphor for a continuous rebellion against the contained quality of established forms, and against language's ongoing impulse towards convention and codification. Because of the figure's ambiguous subjectivity and metaphorical wanderings the flâneur is now prominent in women's writing that questions given representations of female subjectivity, and that is concerned with language structures that repress the feminine.

Nevertheless, most current criticism on flânerie dismisses the possibility of a female flâneur through arguments that understand the socio-historical flâneur as primary to any linguistic manifestations of the figure. (See Wolff's "The Invisible *Flâneuse,*" for example.) Even critics who argue *for* the possibility of a female flâneur separate the social figure from the linguistic one, suggesting that the experience of the world exists separate from the experience of language.[2]

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[1] Warren Tallman, "The Writing Life," *God Awful Streets of Man*, ed. Donald Allen, spec. issue of *Open Letter* 3.6 (1976): 152.

The flâneur of the nineteenth century is described as an insatiable walker, a lone urban stroller and witness, or "unwilling detective" to a swiftly changing metropolis (Benjamin, "The *Flâneur*" *Charles Baudelaire* 40). He is a public figure who is, nevertheless, through his social position[3] and subversive spatial practices (that privilege the margin over the centre, the chance encounter over repetition, loitering over a purposeful civic-minded pace), disengaged from the masses and the economy of High Capitalism. Because Walter Benjamin, who theorizes the flâneur as a "prosthetic vehicle of a new vision" (Jennings, introduction, *The Writer* 9), limits this figure to the Paris of the nineteenth century,[4] a place and time when women's mobility in public was limited and associated with commercial exchange, critics who see the flâneur grounded in this socio-historical context discredit the possibility of a female flâneur.[5] This, coupled with the fact that the flâneur was theorized, by Charles Baudelaire, as the artist and the hero of modern life and literature, leaves women writers and readers without their own organizing metaphor, their own modern hero(ine), with which to develop their particular cultural vision and formal aesthetics within a modern literary tradition.

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[2] Deborah Parsons, introduction, *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City and Modernity*,1-16. Parsons' argument for "gender-related city consciousness" assumes that the female writer-flâneur's experience in the city leads to a consciousness that is fundamentally different from male consciousness, and that this, in turn, leads to alternative literary forms. She says she is focusing on women writers "who translate the experience of urban space into their narrative form" (7). She assumes, in other words, that the writer's bodily experience is an unmediated nurturing ground for literary production. She assumes that language is only a representation of social experience, without problematizing the fact that it also affects our perception of experience.

[3] The flâneur was sometimes associated with the destitute (for example, in the poetry of Charles Baudelaire), and sometimes with the dandy who, as a member of the leisure class, had the financial means to stroll about without purpose as a way of protesting the machinery of capitalism that had forced a portion of society into enforced idleness, and others into long hours of mechanical labour.

[4] See "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire," *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire* (Cambridge:The Belknap Press of HUP, 2006) 66-96.

[5] See, in particular, Janet Wolff's "The artist and the *flâneur*: Rodin, Rilke and Gwen John in Paris," *The Flâneur* ed. Keith Tester (London: Routledge, 1994) 128-131;

If one is to argue for a female flâneur at all, then, one must begin by rejecting the model of the flâneur suggested by Janet Wolff: one that assumes the flâneur's literary tradition can only be one of representational realism determined by pervasive socio-historical evidence. In *Feminine Sentences* Wolff argues that "[t]here is no question of inventing the *flâneuse*: the essential point is that such a character was rendered impossible by the sexual divisions of the nineteenth century" ("The Invisible" 47)—divisions that excluded mostly bourgeois women from the public arena which is the flâneur's milieu. Deborah Parsons who, in her book *Streetwalking the Metropolis*, supports the concept a female flâneur, points out that Wolff's argument "ignores the important point that the *flâneur* is not only a historical figure but also a critical metaphor for the characteristic perspective of the modern artist" (5). Parsons criticizes Wolff for the "tendency to blur historical actuality with its use as a cultural, critical phenomenon" (5).

Wolff's argument does seem to ignore that the different incarnations and functions of the flâneur—found in the poetry and essays of Baudelaire, and in the criticism of Benjamin—suggest the flâneur was never a set social type. He moves ambiguously between, or is an interpenetration of, dandy and vagrant, poet and prostitute, walker and idler. He is immersed in the crowd and then removed to a place of scopic authority. He has been associated with Paris of Old—its winding streets conducive to

---

and "The Invisible *Flâneuse*: Women and the Literature of Modernity," *Feminine Sentences*.

revolutionary protests—and with the reconstructed Paris of Arcades and Capitalism. As a metaphor for the relationship of the artist to the city the flâneur has proven to be at once historical and evolving. He is, as Parsons notes, "an increasingly expansive figure who represents a variety of 'wanderings,' in terms of ambulation, nationality, gender, race, class, and sexuality" (4). Since Baudelaire's time, the conceptual limitations each critic and artist brings to this dynamic metaphor are subverted or re-evaluated as each new social subject enters the city and challenges the limits of the public discourses: whether they are literary, theoretical or civic.

To challenge the conflation of the socio-historical figure with the allegorical one, Parsons' own theory towards the female flâneur begins with a conscious separation of the two realms. In doing so she recognizes a female experience of urban public space, and so modernity, that is different from the male one; this results in "gendered models of modern urban vision" (6). Parsons argues convincingly for a female urban observer that arrives on the street slightly later that the Baudelaire's and Benjamin's flâneur:

> Whereas Benjamin's *flâneur* increasingly becomes a metaphor for observation, retreating from the city streets once the arcades are destroyed to a place of scopic authority yet static detachment, women were entering the city with fresh eyes, observing it from within. It is with this social influx of women as empirical observers into the city street that aesthetic, urban perception as a specifically masculine phenomenon and privilege is challenged. (6)

With her gendered models Parsons is able to identify a female observer who has distinct historical experiences that translate into a distinctly female city consciousness. However, Parsons' assumption that women enter the street as "empirical observers" with "fresh eyes" is indicative of an under-examined premise at the root of the theory of flânerie: that there is a purity to perception that precedes, and so can undo, dominant ideology—as though what and how we perceive is not always influenced by the dominant ideology and the Law of the Polis;[6] and as though when a woman enters public space "freely" her perceptions, movement, and the way she narrates her experience are not still governed by the "civic order that inhabits all of us" (Mouré, "Poetry, Memory, and the Polis" 202).

In an essay called "Breaking Boundaries: Writing as Social Practice or 'Attentiveness'" Erin Mouré challenges the premise of pure perception. Her argument is useful for this study that will challenge the motif of the surprise encounter (the pure or direct experience with the city and its objects) that is at the centre of Baudelaire's poetic process. This motif of surprise has not been problematized by feminist critics who have appropriated it for arguments towards a female urban experience and vision that is fundamentally different from the male one.[7] Mouré writes:

> [T]he way we *conceptualize*, (i.e. the categories and connections in our thinking by which we organize the world), affects the way we *perceive*. We don't "perceive," then "interpret." Interpretation is an instantaneous shutter. The world is simultaneously perceived and framed. "Seeing" and "hearing" are never *pure*,

---

[6] By "The Law of the Polis" Mouré means thinking to an end: the civic-minded binary and hierarchical thinking that, eventually, leads to decay. This entropy is seen as the organizing Law of the City. It will be contextualized later in the essay.

[7] See Baudelaire's "The Painter of Modern Life," 397-398. Here the flâneur-artist's perception is likened to that of a child's or a convalescent's in terms of its intensity and novelty. On Baudelaire's use of the shock motif, see Walter Benjamin's essay "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," *The Writer of Modern Life*. 170-210.

> never *objective*. These great tools of the writer are not, in themselves, unproblematic. We're not as open to the "new" as we think we are. (18)

If we are to recognize a distinctly female urban consciousness we cannot begin with the assumption that a female enters the public world with a perception untainted by the Law that has repressed it. It is the mistrust of the pure impact of the urban image on the female flâneur and, by extension, a mistrust of the purity of the process of achieving new forms of expression, which provides the theoretical context for a literary flânerie-in-the-feminine. If we do not acknowledge and challenge the ways in which the Law of the Polis affects the writing and receiving of history, the female flâneur will remain either a historical impossibility, as is the case in Wolff's argument, or a theoretical concept limited by borrowed but unproblematized terms put forth by the masculine characterization of the figure.

We see the latter problem arise in Parsons' attempts to construct a female flâneur out of the qualities of Charles Baudelaire's male model. For example, her argument begins with the presumption that the flâneur's "gender ambiguities" are a "contestation of male authority rather than the epitome of it" (5-6); however, this premise does not account for the fact that this subversion of authority was still in the interest of re-working the male subject within a male tradition. The characteristics of the male flâneur can be useful as points of departure for a theory of female flânerie, but a transparent application of certain pieces of male flânerie does not get at the root of what must be addressed in a female construction: as Luce Irigaray notes, if we are to recognize the "procedures of repression" at work in philosophy (and this can include a theory of the flâneur) we must examine "the *operation of the 'grammar'* of each figure of discourse, its syntactic laws or requirements, its imaginary configurations, its metaphoric networks, and also, of course, what it does not articulate at the level of utterance: *its silences.*" ("The Power," *This Sex* 75). This means that in the process of defining a female flâneur, when we look to the male flâneur we must look to the "structuration of language that shores up its representations" (75), and not just pull out the parts of its characterization that we like.

Critics who do not do this often attempt to locate a female flâneur in Baudelaire's allegory of the nineteenth century prostitute. Elizabeth Wilson suggests that "just as the *flâneur* was a prostitute" (Baudelaire's poet-flâneur must, eventually, prostitute himself to the market) then "perhaps also the prostitute could be said to be the female *flâneur*." She admits there were important differences, without mentioning what they are, but says that "both shared an intimate knowledge of the dark recesses of urban life. They understood, better than anyone, the pitiless way in which the city offered an intensity of joy that was never, somehow, fulfilled" (*The Sphinx in the City* 55). Wilson fails to mention, for the sake of finding similarities, that the logic of this association of prostitute and poet is based on an ideal portrayal of the prostitute perpetuated by the "metaphorical network" of the male symbolic system. "Whose joy?" we might ask. The supposed subjective (deferred) pleasure of the prostitute is really one attributed to her, as an object, by male desire.

Sonya Stephens in *Baudelaire's Prose Poems* also perpetuates this metaphor when she discusses the imaginative and creative value Baudelaire takes from the allegory of the poet as prostitute: "Although [the poet] is bound by the economic requirements of publication, and subject to rape by the critical public, like every good prostitute, he can feign a *persona* to which the client is dupe. In this way, the prostitute retains a sense of privacy and dignity (the sacrifice and pleasure being only performance) and the poet retains his spiritual integrity" (58-59). Stephens' ironic tone suggests that perhaps the allegory of the poet-as-prostitute is not based on the social experience of the real prostitute of the nineteenth century: the metaphor of the prostitute is only able to have a positive value for Baudelaire, despite the fact that the social role is viewed negatively, because its referent is not the social figure but another sign in the male symbolic: as Luce Irigaray observes, "[t]he production of women, signs, and commodities is always referred back to men" ("Women on the Market," *This Sex* 171).

Nevertheless, Stephens seems to think that this metaphor of privacy or remove does, indeed, work: "[a]rt as prostitution is self-exclusion from the conventional, but Baudelaire's formulation suggests mastery of a sort which, although it operates on the margins, defies codification and regulation by the (bourgeois) other" (60). She does not acknowledge the way the prostitution metaphor fails to defy codification and regulation in that it remains a code within a dominant poetics: can the prostitute successfully symbolize the ambiguous identity or marginal stance of the poet (who, from under this guise, produces art that supposedly *disrupts* the commodification, and standardization of language) when the prostitute is one of the governing codes of a patriarchal, and so ultimately regulatory, symbolic order?

The failure of the poet-prostitute metaphor hinges on the discrepancy between how the poet and prostitute are regulated by social discourse. While the male flâneur-poet may be marginalized, he is not regulated by the law to the extent the prostitute was in Paris during his time: any poor woman alone on the street could be forced—through physical violence, intimidation, or jail time—to register as a prostitute so that her movement in the city could be monitored and controlled. In mid to late nineteenth century France the *Police des Moeurs* [Morals Police] "could arrest working-class women for anything or nothing, and they would sometimes round up groups of female passersby on the boulevards to meet their quotas (Solnit 238).[8] In other words, any single woman alone in public signified prostitution, whether or not she actually was a prostitute, so that all public women could be regulated. The prostitute functions in a similar way in language: seemingly suggesting a force that disrupts the order, while really being a regulating function of that order. These attempts to fit the female flâneur into the masculine model of flânerie exhibit how, without a deconstruction its "metaphorical networks," the female flâneur (as prostitute) is reabsorbed back into the male symbolic.

To return, then, to Irigaray's argument that we must look to the structuration of language that shore up representations, in the case of public women, we can see that the argument for or against the possibility of a female flâneur should not begin with the questions of whether or not, or when, women in general had sufficient access to public space, and sufficient freedom from economic exchange to be flâneurs. These are terms set up by Baudelaire and Benjamin that preclude the possibility of a female flâneur. Instead, we must look to how public women were able to subvert the Law of the Polis through a deliberate manipulation the masculine symbolic order. Women's flânerie begins when women's physical access to the public world, through her own strategies, coincides with her linguistic one because, in fact, the former is realized through the later: there is no social reality outside of language, and so the two cannot be separated.

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[8] For more history on this see Rebecca Solnit "Walking After Midnight: Women, Sex, and Public Space," *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*. 232-246.

A flânerie that meshes linguistic, social, and physical mobility requires a shift in how we think of the flâneur-artist as a subject and how she relates to a literary work. While the detachment of the male modernist flâneur suggests a de-stabalized subject, he is still "always in full possession of his individuality" in relation to the crowd. (Fournel qtd. in Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* [M6, 5] 429). Baudelaire's subject may appear multiple, but he is not porous and he does not give up his subjective authority. Alternatively, the female urban stroller, now so common in women's language-centred writing, is first and foremost a "subject-in-process" which Gail Scott defines as "[n]ot the 'self' as a (feminist or otherwise) predetermined figure, but a complex tissue of texts, experience, evolving in the very act of writing." No longer outside of, or preceding writing, the female flâneur as a "subject-in-process" includes both what is represented and what is repressed in the "fluid space of meaning" (*Spaces* 11). This construction means the female flâneur is no longer limited by the social restrictions and ideologies of the mid-nineteenth century.

Therefore, in this paper I will look at female flânerie primarily as a self-consciously rebellious *writing act*. The restless mobility of the flâneur is a metaphor for a feminist writing process that takes the subject into "the gaps [of] history" and "the spaces between the established genres" (Scott, *Spaces* 10). This will not mean the rejection of social experience, but rather an understanding that social experience, and the history of it, is always mediated by language and its products (ideologies, conventions, linguistic constructs). Therefore, if flânerie is primarily about the rebelling against the Law of the

Polis, then this rebellion must begin with a rebellion in language.[9] A woman who enters, and has to negotiate and rebel against, the masculine space of the city must necessarily negotiate her place in the masculine order of language.

---

[9] I do not mean to diminish the real and violent restrictions that attempted to control the social, mental, emotional lives of women in the nineteenth century, nor the importance of writing that articulates this experience. However, important to this argument for a female flâneur is an understanding that the suppression of women begins with how language is used to regulate them in ideology and law.

Chapter 1. Tracing the Textual Routes of the Female Flâneur

Woman must put herself into the text –as into the world and into history – by her own movement.

Hélène Cixous[10]

Some Motifs of Female Flânerie

To understand the linguistic rebellion of the female flâneur we must recognize the major motifs belonging to her flânerie that distinguish her writing process from that of the male flâneur. Walter Benjamin outlined those of Charles Baudelaire's flâneur-poet in his essay "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire." Baudelaire's flânerie, as Benjamin outlines it, is defined, primarily, by the motif of shock: "Baudelaire placed shock experience [*Chockerfahrung*] at the very center of his art" (*The Writer* 178). This motif of shock was meant to decrease the narrative of the poem and increase attention to the image: what concerns the flâneur-poet most is "[n]amely, images, wherever they lodge" ("The Return of the *Flâneur*" 264). As a poet, the flâneur works against the commodification, and so standardization, of language and its forms that accompanied the accelerated industrialization of the nineteenth century.[11] The shock factor that disrupts the notion of progress, and marks the experience of social alienation, also signifies a sudden break with formal convention. Baudelaire intersects a social and literary protest by having the flâneur's confrontation with the street-image parallel the reader's confrontation with the harsh and unexpected image of the poem.

---

[10] Hélène Cixous,"The Laugh of the Medusa," *New French Feminisms* (New York: Schocken Books, 1981) 245.

[11] See Walter Benjamin's essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,"*Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969) 217-251.

However, the introduction of fresh images into poetry comes with conservative, patriarchal undertones: the public women of Baudelaire's poetry, lesbians and prostitutes, were culturally repressed subject matter and so facilitated that experience of shock in the poem that would open up the reader to a new experience of reading poetry—but Baudelaire was not interested in articulating the repressed voice of those subjects he used, as is hinted at in Benjamin's comment: "Baudelaire never wrote a whore-poem from the point of view of the whore" (*Arcades*, [J66a,7] 347).

Because women have always been intra-exiles within the Law of the Polis, and within the dominant discourse they have internalized, there isn't, for the female flâneur, this sudden critical moment of social alienation. There is not the moment of shock that facilitates the collapse of convention, nor the subsequent inward turn from official culture—both essential to the creative process of the male flâneur. Instead, there is the recognition of the crisis of having internalized the Law, and a subsequent ongoing subversion of it from within in a way that intersects semiotics with the sensory body.

Therefore, what distinguishes female flânerie from male flânerie is that its primary motif is *not* the perception of the shocking image; its primary motif is *the sensory experience of rebellious movement* of the female urban subject who has been, traditionally, controlled and contained. While mobility is important in the male tradition of poetic flânerie—the flâneur is characterized by his restless movement in the crowd—it is secondary to, and in service of, bringing forth and elevating the everyday image. This dynamic is evident in the poems of Baudelaire, most famously in "A une passante" [To a

Woman Passing By], where the movement of an abstract crowd quickly reveals and then conceals the fleeting image: "Un éclair. . .puis la nuit!—Fugitive beauté/ Dont le regard m'a fait soudainement renâitre,/ Ne te verrai-je plus que dans l'éternité?" [One lightning flash. . . then night! Sweet fugitive/ Whose glance has made me suddenly reborn, / Will we not meet again this side of death?](*The Flowers of Evil* 188; 189); it is evident in "Les Petites Vieilles" [The Little Old Women] where the flâneur moves through the maze of the city, like a detective, hunting down the desired objects for his poetic images: "Dans les plis sinueux des vieilles capitales,/ Où tout, même l'horreur, tourne aux enchantements,/ Je guette, obeisant a mes humeurs fatales,/ Des êtres singuliers, décrépits et charmants." [In sinuous folds of cities old and grim,/ Where all things, even horror, turn to grace,/ I follow, in obedience to my whim,/ Strange, feeble, charming creatures round the place.] (*Flowers of Evil: a Selection* 88; 89).

Found repeatedly in the essays of writers concerned with the female-subject-in process is the motif of movement which is a response to Woman's discomfort with, as Virginia Woolf said, "'the very form of the sentence [which] does not fit her'" (Woolf qtd. in Scott, *Spaces* 9). It is not surprising, then, that the women who found subversive routes through public spaces, on their own terms, also found rebellious movement within the sentence. In female flânerie, we can understand the hesitation that characterizes the flâneur's mobility as a metaphor for a self-conscious dissent from the male line. The flâneur's constant deferral of writing becomes the female flâneur's recognition of all that is possible in excess of a tradition that negates her possibility; the flâneur's loitering becomes the female flâneur's hesitation and slight retreat. And so, in its most meta-textual examples, female flânerie approaches what Gail Scott calls "fiction-theory" in which a "habit of stopping to reflect on the process within the text itself looks forward toward a meaning in-the-feminine" (*Spaces* 47). Female flânerie is thus more closely connected to the self-consciousness of meshed discourses that belongs to post-modernism than to the early modernism of Baudelaire, and the later modernism of the imagists. The female flâneur is more defined by her engagement with movement itself within the crowd, than by the detachment from the crowd: a detachment that provides the necessary distance for the production of the male flâneur's image.

Along with movement, disguise and mimicry are important motifs that come up, repeatedly, in early female flânerie. They are the parodic components that allow for mobility. We will see in the examples of female flânerie to follow a parody of the very social criteria of the flâneur that Parkhurst Ferguson and Wolff use to argue *against* the possibility of a flâneuse. These are: "a freedom to move about in the city" (Wolff, "The Invisible" 39), and "the detachment from the ordinary social world" (Parkhurst Ferguson, "The *Flâneur,*" *The* Flâneur 26). Wolff notes that the dominant ideology of the nineteenth century clearly relegated women to the private sphere so that any women who were in the street were "render[ed] invisible (or unrespectable)" ("The Artist" 119). Wolff agrees with Parkhurst Ferguson that although the establishment of the department store in the later half of the nineteenth century did give women a place in the public arena that was acceptable within the dominant ideology, "the desire for the object on display rules out the necessary distance which characterizes the *flâneur*'s relationship to the public sphere. In addition, the shopper is engaged in a kind of purposive mobility which has nothing to do with the detached and aimless strolling of the *flâneur*" ("The Artist"125).[12]

First of all, these dismissals fail to account for the irony that has always existed in the flâneur's relationship to capitalism. In his early conception, as a man of leisure, the flâneur was able to protest the life of the bourgeoisie through his idle walks only because he was the descendent of an aristocratic class that had exploited the worker. Irony is also felt in the previously mentioned observation by Baudelaire that the flâneur-poet, though repulsed by the market, must inevitably enter it to make a living. Secondly, it is, in fact, the public woman who is most able to separate herself from the market: the early female flâneurs were able to get around the limited roles ascribed to them by the male symbolic (as consumer or consumer-item) through methods of disguise and mimicry that aided their access to mobility.

For the female flâneur, gender becomes just one of many possible guises. Just as the male flâneur assumes the identity of dandy or ragpicker to gain critical distance from the laws that govern the majority, the female flâneur will at times dress as a man-about-town, or *deliberately* assume the characteristics of the feminine role, as shopper, when it helps her to gain access to the public arena. Luce Irigaray argues in her interview "The Power of Discourse" that in the initial phase of the project to introduce the female sex into public discourse there is "perhaps only one 'path,' the one historically assigned to the feminine: that of *mimicry*. One must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to begin to thwart it" ("The Power," *This Sex* 76). We can add that, since the male flâneur was of ambiguous gender, the female flâneur can, without fear of detection, use this "feminized" configuration of the masculine as a guise which affords her the mobility to work out her *own* concept of gender.

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[12] Wolff is referring to Parkhurst Ferguson's essay "The *flâneur* on and off the streets of Paris" in Tester's *The* Flâneur: 22-42.

A theory towards the practice of female flânerie understands that mimicry is a necessary first step towards self definition: there is no social existence outside the Law established by the patriarchy—not even, as Wolff suggests, in the private realm which is supposedly the female arena of the nineteenth century.[13] Women's identity must, then, involve a subversion of this Law through mimicry and disguise which draws attention to the arbitrary social constructedness of gender. This exposure allows her the possibility of undoing the identity that has been fixed to her. For the female flâneur, the motifs of disguise and mimicry are necessary and work in conjunction with the central motif of movement. In the early examples of female flânerie we see how these two motifs work together to set the groundwork for a theory of contemporary female flânerie.

The Foundational Texts of Female Literary Flânerie

A tradition of literary female flânerie begins, not with pervasive social examples, but important exceptions. Janet Wolff's sociological method of examining society and its types is the very kind of evaluative process that the self-defining flâneur, with his secretive subjectivity and social remove, challenges. In all constructions of the flâneur we see the figure resist the official categories of citizenship followed by the majority. While it is true that the social conditions of the nineteenth century made flânerie almost impossible for nearly all nineteenth century women, the female flâneur, like the male flâneur, found exceptional practical ways of gaining access to the public world while also evading the restraints that organized and governed the masses. Therefore, in an argument towards a theory of female flânerie that begins with the act and evidence of writing, it is more useful to look at the rare but influential texts of the female flâneur from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, than attempt to discount the practice because it was not available or undertaken by the majority of women. In the following few pages I will look at George Sand, Madame Bovary, and Virginia Woolf as early examples of the female flâneur.[14]

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[13] In her essay "The Invisible *Flâneuse*" Wolff suggests that modern literature describes the experience of men because it is about "transformations in the public world" (34), and that if modern literature included an account of the private realm, this would automatically describe the experience of women. In other words, she does not account for the fact that patriarchal ideology, in law and language, governed both private and public realms.

I. George Sand

Janet Wolff's central argument against the possibility of a female flâneur is that: because the literature of modernity is "about transformations in the public world," and because women did not have enough safe access to the public realm, this literature necessarily "describes the experience of men" (34). This logic misses the importance of mimicry as a central part of the female flâneur's experience in the public world. To support her argument that women could not experience the public world as women, Wolff quotes the following account by George Sand from her autobiography *My Life*. Although she was a writer on the freedoms and independence of women, Sand, nevertheless, had to disguise herself as a boy in order to move about Paris to "learn about the ideas and arts of the time" ("The Invisible" 41):

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[14] I have deliberately chosen different genres: biography, fiction and essay, to emphasize that female flânerie as a writing practice can happen in all categories of writing.

> So I had made for myself a *redingote-guérite* in a heavy gray cloth, pants and vest to match. With a gray hat and large woollen cravat, I was a perfect first-year student. I can't express the pleasure my boots gave me: I would gladly have slept with them, as my brother did in his young age, when he got his first pair. With those little iron-shod heels, I was solid on the pavement. I flew from one end of Paris to the other. It seemed to me that I could go round the world. And then, my clothes feared nothing. I ran out in every kind of weather, I came home at every sort of hour, I sat in the pit at the theatre. No one paid attention to me, and no one guessed at my disguise. . .No one knew me, no one looked at me, no one found fault with me; I was an atom lost in that immense crowd. ("The Invisible" 41)

While it is true that Sand's disguise gained her access to the public world, it is not true, as Wolff suggests, that adopting the appearance of a man is to adopt a male *experience*: which implies a transparency between public and private identity, and between ascribed gender and an individual's experience of, and in excess of, the role given to her. Wolff re-enforces the definition of the female flâneur as a lack in the discourse of the male flâneur when she says Sand "could not adopt the non-existent role of a *flâneuse*. Women could not stroll alone in the city" ("The Invisible" 41). Sand is, on the contrary, evidence that women *could* stroll alone in the city, if disguised, and that the resulting pleasure is *unique* to a woman dressed as a boy. Sand's bodily experience of the merger and discord of gender roles signals what Irigaray calls a "disruptive excess" in respect to the male "economy of the logos" that is based on a subject and object binary: in which woman is always the "lack," the "deficiency," "imitation," or "negative image" of the subject ("The Power,"*This Sex* 78). In a playful and inconclusive mingling of object and subject positions (female and male) Sand effectively "jam[s] the theoretical machinery" of male logic rather than repeat it (78).

"[I]f women are such good mimics," Irigaray argues, "it is because they are not simply resorbed in this function. *They also remain elsewhere:* another case of the persistence of 'matter,' but also of 'sexual pleasure.'" (76). If we attend to the way Sand expresses the hidden pleasure of her complex persona and her persistent tactile experience of the world through it, we see that this passage is not, primarily, about adopting a male identity or experience, or even necessarily of *what* she sees, but about the sensation of her mobility, the pleasure of disguise that her "elsewhere" affords, and about the joy of having the freedom to move about the city wherever and whenever she wants to without being an object of the absorbing patriarchal gaze. Disguise not only allows her into spaces she wouldn't ordinarily go, it allows her to be experimental with her physical movement; beyond Wolff's quotation above, the passage from Sand reads: "'[t]here is a way of slipping hither and thither without one head turning your way."[15]

If we consider how women's mobility has been conceived, historically, we see how the pleasure of the flâneur's anonymity takes on a particular meaning when it is worn by a woman. As Rebecca Solnit notes, the language used around women's travel implies that their travel "is inevitably sexual or that their sexuality is transgressive when it travels";[16] this is because "women's walking is often construed as performance rather than transport, with the implication that women walk not to see but to be seen, not for their own experience but for that of a male audience" (234). This history of women's walking is the subtext of Sand's line: "No one found fault with me." Her anonymity allows her to shift from being an object of male pleasure to a subject experiencing female pleasure in a fluid identity that is made up of disguise and its excess. In drag that troubles an already rebellious figure from the male symbolic, Sand takes the first step in articulating the feminine pleasure that Irigaray says is "strictly forbidden" and must "remain inarticulate in language, in its own language, if it is not to threaten the underpinnings of logical operations" ("The Power," *This Sex* 77).

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[15] I have quoted from a different translation than Wolff: George Sand. *My Life*, trans.Dan Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1979) 204.

[16] "Among the terms for prostitutes are streetwalkers, women of the streets, women on the town, and public women (and of course phrases such as public man, man about town, or man of the streets mean very different things than do their equivalents attached to women). A woman who has violated sexual convention can be said to be

II. Emma Bovary

Gustave Flaubert when writing *Madame Bovary* clearly understood the relationship between the physical constraint of women and the absence of their voices in the public discourse; he also saw how the power of a repressed female desire could energize his prose. He says in a letter to Louise Colet during the writing of the novel: "[i]f my book is good, it will gently caress many a feminine wound: more than one woman will smile as she recognizes herself in it. Oh, I'll be well acquainted with what they go through, poor unsung souls! And with the secret sadness that oozes from them, like the moss on the walls of their provincial backyards..."[17] This "gated" (walled-in) wound that Flaubert strokes to release female pleasure unites the female sex with the feminine voice in a way that anticipates the anatomic imagery in Irigaray. Flaubert's smug self-proclaimed understanding of women re-enforces the Other of the male

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strolling, roaming, wandering, straying. . ." (234). Solnit uses English terms but there are, presumably, similar ones in French.

[17] Gustave Flaubert, "To Louise Colet," 1 Sept. 1852, *The Letters*, 167-168.

imaginary; however, the argument to come will make clear that, although Flaubert is certainly not the first to make use of women's repressed desire, he is one of the first to relate the "unsung" desire of an urban woman with a modern, innovative poetics.

Emma Bovary's heroism comes from her relentless aspirations of self-actualization and articulation that she feels will come with the ability to move about freely—mobility is, I would argue, at the root of all of Emma's superficial monetary and sexual desires. The objects Emma buys and the men she loves are valuable to her only in that they represent her fantasy of Paris, the dream-city of her emancipation and vague subjectivity; when Emma listens to the sound of carriers in the night headed for Paris: "she follow[s] them in her mind's eye, up hill and down dale, passing through villages, trundling along the highroad in the starlight. After going some distance, there [is] always a vague blur where her imagination fail[s]" (70).[18] If we view Emma's desire for mobility as connected to what Beth Gerwin in her paper, "Emma Unbound: mobility and stagnation in *Madame Bovary,*" calls Emma's "burning wish to escape to a different order" (2), we will view Emma's spending practices less as a sign of women's inextricable tie to the market, and more as a gesture akin to that of Walter Benjamin's collector "who accumulates possessions in order to make a place in the world in which, in truth, he has no place" (Parkhurst Ferguson, "The *Flâneur*: Urbanization and Its Discontents" 58). While Emma is never able to realize her place/subjectivity—it remains, like Paris, an unattainable blur—she is a subject-in-process: an aspiring female flâneur that points to the discrepancy between the social construction of women and unrealized female desire.

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[18] Paris, as a dream city, is the site of this freedom for Emma; it is the missing but always looming and desired centre of the novel. It appears in the novels Emma reads; its gossip and good life are memorized from magazines; its map is traced with longing fingers; she imports fashions in small parcels and carefully arranges them in her country home; her dandy lovers are chosen because they represent mobility and freedom she imagines exists in Paris: they leave the narrative to travel there and return with its stories.

Emma is one of the most socially restrained heroines in Western Literature; therefore, her access to movement and travel to the city is secured through covert means: male guise and female mimicry. Because there is an absence of female flâneurs in Emma's social world, she projects her desires onto her dandy lovers, or models herself on them. It is significant to note that Emma does not dress as a provincial man: she adopts the dress and persona of the Parisian man-about-town, a type that signifies insatiable restlessness and homelessness. Her evolution as a character takes her from lavish balls to student pubs in squalid quarters of the city: from the milieu of the bourgeoisie to that of Baudelaire's flâneur. Emma accessorizes as a man would: she orders a large black coat for her elopement with her Dandy lover Rodolphe; tucks her eyeglasses between the buttons down her front; and goes to a masked ball wearing "velvet breeches and red stockings, a knotted wig, a cocked hat tilted over one ear" (302). She smokes cigars, something George Sand was famous for; however, unlike the cross-dressing of Sand, which affords real mobility and a protective social cover for the development of a female subjectivity, Emma's cross-dressing is an unsettling combination of gender signs that she performs overtly in public. She goes out with "Monsieur Rodolphe with a cigarette in her mouth, as though to snap her fingers at the world; and those who still doubted, doubted no longer when they saw her step out of the *Hirondelle* with her figure squeezed into a waistcoat, like a man" (204). Although this cross-dressing highlights the ambiguous gender of the flâneur, and makes public woman's desire to be something other than the "*masquerade of femininity,*"[19] it is, for the age, socially dangerous and gives her no real protection for access to public space. This guise suggests a desire for, but failure to, find a practice to support a distinct female imaginary. In this guise she, much more than Sand, resembles the failure of the female flâneur that Wolff discusses—she adopts, rather than subverts, the persona of her dandy lovers who objectify and abandon her.

Emma's real access to mobility comes from assuming the feminine role deliberately in an act of "mimicry" (Irigaray, "The Power" *This Sex* 76).[20] Emma employs the construct of femininity to secure various methods of escape from her repressive, sedentary life. In her initial attempt, Emma sits and sews, seductively sucking the blood from her pricked finger in front of Charles, her future husband, who she hopes will take her to Paris, or at least to the city of Rouen (28). We know she assumes a role incongruous to her desire as we are told that it took Emma quite a while to find her sewing case. We are also told that she is of little help to her father around the house, and later that she is not much for gardening.

Mimicry of the feminine becomes more perverse the more desperate Emma is for mobility. Affecting motherly concern, she feigns a desire to visit her child in order to leave the confines of her country house; she compromises herself by crossing town on the arm of Léon, and is ogled by all the eyes in the small town of Yonville. To reach the wet nurse's home they take the undeveloped narrow paths that run between cottages and backyards: whenever Emma Bovary sets out on her walks she defies the pathways laid out by city planners, much as a flâneur would. She uses a visit to her child, again, as the excuse for her mobility when she is caught, at gunpoint, crossing a field in the early morning returning home from Rodolphe's.

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[19] Luce Irigaray, "Questions," *This Sex*. 134.

[20] In the "Publisher's "Notes on Selected Terms" at the back of *This Sex*, mimicry is defined as "[a]n interim strategy for dealing with the realm of discourse (where the speaking subject is posited as masculine), in which the woman deliberately assumes the feminine style and posture assigned to her within this discourse in order to uncover the mechanisms by which it exploits her" (220). It is important to distinguish this from masquerade, which Irigaray defines as a "woman's entry into a system of values that is not hers, and in which she can 'appear' and circulate only when enveloped in the needs/desires/fantasies of others, namely, men" ("Questions," *The Sex* 134).

Emma's most brazen use of mimicry happens when she legitimizes her time in the city by pretending to go there for piano lessons designed to cultivate her womanliness and provide skills she can pass on to her daughter. This opportunity allows Emma to spend time in Rouen with her lover once a week (272). Nineteenth century women were "often portrayed as too frail and pure for the mire of urban life" (Solnit 237). Ironically, Emma employs the cliché of female frailty to gain access to a greater amount of time, and thus freedom, in Rouen. While there, Emma unexpectedly runs into her husband Charles who has come looking for her because she has not returned home; she passes a hand over her forehead and claims she has not felt well and so has been staying at the home of her piano teacher (who, in reality, she has not seen for weeks) (288). This mimicry of the feminine is employed again when Emma uses the excuse of fatigue from the distance travelled to linger with Rodolphe in the forest. Emma repeatedly reminds us that femininity, whether virtuous or corrupt, is a social construct that is often at odds with feminine desire.

That Emma's primary desire is that of the flâneur's, one of movement with no final destination, is evident in scenes of the novel where we see the pleasure she gets from solitary flânerie in odd places during odd hours, and of her own volition. This is most evident in a scene that precedes Emma's shadowing of Léon through the streets of Rouen. She has just arrived for her "piano lesson" as the town is waking:[21]

> Shop fronts were being polished by assistants in caps, and at the street corners women with baskets at their hips uttered the occasional resonant cries. She slipped along by the wall, her eyes on the ground, smiling for joy beneath her lowered veil.
>
> To avoid the main streets, where she might be seen, Emma plunged into dark alley-ways, and emerged, wet with perspiration, at the lower end of the Rue Nationale, close by the fountain. This is the district of the theatres, bars and brothels. Often a cart would pass by loaded with rickety stage scenery. Aproned waiters scattered sand over the pavement, between tubs of evergreen. She walked amid a smell of absinthe, cigars and oysters. (274-275)

It is Flaubert's description (which elevates the details of everyday city life) that resembles the perception of the male flâneur. However, this passage suggests a female flânerie that is in excess of the male flâneur's gaze: at first, just one object among many in the street scene, Emma turns her eyes to the ground in a veiled joy, creating a distance between herself and reader (and perhaps writer) that establishes her as an evasive subject rather than object of the flâneur's gaze. She then slips out of both reader's and writer's view and emerges wet: an image that suggests both a sexual, and semiotic submersion, into yet another "visible" quarter of the city. This passage is filled with an ecstatic movement that likens it to the passage quoted from Sand: in both, the female flâneur is evasive, unpredictably mobile, and in a state of pleasure that comes from her access to the city and from transgressive movement itself.

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[21] Secretly pursuing a stranger or beloved through the street is a main past-time of the flâneur. This is explored in Baudelaire's "A une passante" ["To a Woman Passing By"]; in Rainer Maria Rilke's untitled poem [You who never arrived], and in Edgar Allen Poe's story "The Man of the Crowd."

Flaubert's poetics of art for art's sake precludes any reading of Emma Bovary as a flâneur whose mobility addresses a socially conscious interest in the articulation of a female voice. Although Emma's struggle as an aspiring flâneur is a struggle for articulation of her subjectivity, Flaubert hi-jacks a woman's experience in society and language to make a metaphor for his own struggle in evolving a modern form of the novel. However, the tension between the symbolic construction of women and force in excess of this construction (even if this poetic excess is still within the male economy of language) connects Flaubert's poetics of flânerie to current strategies in women's writing.

Modernity was, as Gail Scott points out, "inadvertently involved in opening the space where a new female subject might emerge in all her difference." This opening was unintentional, she says, because male philosophers, and we might add novelists and poets too, who wanted to deconstruct the subject named this "new decoded space of writing 'feminine'"; and though they "tried to keep it 'feminine' on their terms [. . .] the subject-in-the-feminine reconstituted in this space [by feminist writers] remains essentially multiple" ("A Feminist at the Carnival" 246-247). Emma's many subjectivities, although they represent men's fears of the shift into the modern age, also create a space to be entered by the contemporary feminist writer.

In *Madame Bovary*, this feminine space is paradoxical in that Flaubert uses it to criticize the superficial forms of modern life, while also employing the idea of Woman-as-surface to break with conventional ideas of representation or mimesis,[22] and focus on the novel's form. Therefore, Flaubert spends a great deal of time presenting Emma as an object or surface. She represents the illusory and corrupt aspects of modernity (specifically the commodification of art) mixed with passionate impulses of a worn-out Romanticism: aspects of Flaubert's historical moment that he himself battled with in his writing. [23] In his letters around the time he was writing *Madame Bovary* Flaubert often criticizes the elements of modernity that threaten the pure art of writing. These elements are often expressed in metaphors of the urban woman: he writes to his lover Louise Colet "[t]hanks to industrialism, ugliness has assumed gigantic proportions. How many goon people who a century ago could have lived perfectly well without Beau Arts now cannot do without mini-statues, mini-music, and min-literature! [. . .]. On the other hand, cheapness has made real luxery fabulously expensive. Who is willing these days to buy a good watch? [. . .]. We are all fakes and charlatans. Pretense, affectation, humbug everywhere—the crinoline has falsified the buttocks.Our century is a century of whores."[24]

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[22] I will elaborate on the relationship Flaubert establishes between the constructed woman and the evolution of form later on in a discussion involving Irigaray's argument on the natural value of women as the conduit between the world and men's technology.

[23] Beth Gerwin points out in her unpublished paper: "Emma Unbound" that "controlling the expenditure of women's movement" is a recurring motif in Flaubert, closely related to "controlling the energy in textual language" (1). If we look at Flaubert's letters to Louise Colet written at the time he was writing *Madame Bovary* we see the management of emotion, by form, is a constant concern. He says: "[w]e must be on our guard against that feverish state called inspiration, which is often a matter of nerves rather than muscle. At this very moment, for example, I am keyed up to a high pitch—my brow is burning, sentences keep rushing into my head [. . .]. Instead of one idea I have six, and where the most simple exposition is called for I am tempted to elaborate. I am sure I could keep going until tomorrow noon without fatigue. But I know these masked balls of the imagination! You come away from them exhausted and depressed, having seen only falsity and spouted nonsense. Everything should be done coldly, with poise." Gustave Flaubert, "To Louise Colet" 27 Feb. 1853, *The Letters*, 180. That Emma had an emotional downer similar to Flaubert's after several outings to balls is indicative of her use as a motif for Flaubert's own struggle.

Flaubert wrote *Madame Bovary* during the 1850s and 60s, a time when Paris was being dramatically modernized. Even in its most concrete conception, Paris was built on the dreams that supported its architectural change: Paris was reinvented by Napoleon III amidst stock market and property speculation and was financed by George Haussmann entirely by means of floating debts (Wilson 52-53). Paris as a modern city was, from its conception, a dream that, through illusion, avoided facing its own corruption and decay: the failure of the dream. Therefore, the novel is troubled by the way imagination and vision became mixed up with a frenzied illusion and standardization of culture.

Emma takes on many forms as the embodiment of an illusory surface-Paris. She is Baudelaire's passante [passerby]: the woman that is an apparition in the crowd representing love that eludes the poet but releases his passion. Through Léon's gaze we see Emma as passante: "against this background of undistinguished humanity, Emma's face stood out, isolated from them yet still further removed from him. For he had a sense of chasms yawning between himself and her" (109). Her sinful aches are the superficial aches of the city: "the appetites of the flesh, the craving for money, the melancholy of passion" (121). She is its fashion, always "turned out like a Parisian" in layers of enticing surfaces accented with pleasing and ever-changing details (143): her hair done in the Chinese fashion, pretty heelless slippers swing from her toes. Emma is her dress, is surface. Baudelaire asks: "[w]hen he describes the pleasure caused by the sight of a beautiful woman, what poet would dare venture to distinguish between her and her apparel?" For Baudelaire, "the woman and the dress" are an "indivisible whole" ("The

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[24] Gustave Flaubert, "To Louise Colet," 29 Jan. 1854, *The Letters*, 211-215.

Painter" 424). This view of woman as surface is shared by Emma's lover Léon who marvels "at the elevation of [Emma's] soul and the lace on her petticoat" at once (276).

Emma also represents Flaubert's suspicion of historical progress that resembles Baudelaire's. She is the failed ideal of the metropolis, represented first as its glitter and then as its literal ruin. Early on in the novel Emma's Parisian refinements that contribute to the pleasure of Charles' senses are described as "a kind of gold-dust sprinkled along the narrow pathway of his life" (74), connoting the glittering hope modernity instilled in those from the Country. At the end of the novel, considerations for Emma's tombstone include a broken column, a pyramid, and a heap of ruins (356); all suggest the failure of a teleological approach to history by connoting the fallen remains of powerful centres of the past. Her personal rise and fall mimics the grand planning and inevitable tearing down that is the cycle of urban development, and can be read to symbolize the nation's and perhaps continent's, misplaced faith in spectacle, and a dependence on the utopia of the concept city that would leave most people toiling in poverty (Wilson 49). It is, perhaps, not a coincidence that both Emma and George Haussmann, Paris' ambitious nineteenth century city planner, are personally destroyed by unpaid debts. However, in the narrative arch of her life, Emma fulfills the most important role of the flâneur: she acts as a witness to the discrepancy between the ideal, imagined city and the experience of those marginalized and ruined by the Law of the Polis.

Not only is Emma presented as a surface, she is viewed in the manner that resembles the flâneur's perception of the city-surface. Her husband Charles watches "the sunlight glinting on the down of her fair cheeks, half-hidden by the scalloped ribbons of her nightcap," and notices all the striking variants of blue in her eyes that serve only as a looking glass for his own ridiculous upturned image (46); Rodolphe observes the oval of Emma's bonnet acting as a picture frame for Emma's face; and again, Emma's eyes do not do their own seeing but are the image of someone else's gaze: Rodolphe notices that though Emma's eyes "were fully open they appeared slightly narrowed because of the blood that pulsated gently beneath the fine skin that covered her cheek-bones.Where her nostrils met was a pale pink glow" (148). Although Emma is invasively and compulsively studied from the point of view of her lovers she remains represented, through a flâneur's mode of perception, as an inventory of fragments—impenetrable as the surface of the modern city.[25]

The novel's style owes a great deal to the tension between this silenced Emma-object—brutally repressed not only by the men in the novel, but also by how she is represented in language: silent, and in pieces that are fetishized—and her actions and comments that undermine this construction of her. Consider the contrast of the Emma above with the one who is able to articulate her objectification. Emma thinks to herself: "[a] man, at any rate, is free. He can explore the passions and the continents, can surmount obstacles, reach out to the most distant joys. Whereas a woman is constantly thwarted. At once inert and pliant, she has to contend with both physical and legal subordination" (101). She reminds Rodolphe that he has little to grumble about, being both free and rich (152), and later tells Léon that "there's no sense in acquiring tastes you can't indulge, when there are a hundred and one things that have a claim on you." Léon claims to understand and Emma replies: "I doubt if you can. You're not a woman'" (243). With direct speech she articulates her exploitation with complete clarity. Emma is thus a force that suggests there is a repressed female perception; she constantly contests the way the novel's own description of her mocks or fetishizes her as a contained image-commodity.

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[25] With her unseeing eyes, Emma resembles the heroines of Baudelaire's poems that are discussed in Chapter 2.

By making Emma a surface or object that, nevertheless, eludes categorization, Flaubert plays out a major theme of modernity: the anxiety of the destabilizing effects extreme urbanization had on the sense of natural order and representation of that order. The presence of women in cities in the nineteenth century was one of the biggest threats to order partly because "their presence symbolized the promise of sexual adventure [. . . that was] converted into a general moral and political threat" (Wilson 6). The uncertainty of how women should be perceived in the city was indicative of the de-stabilization of subjectivity and a perceived leveling of values produced by the conflicting elements of the city. Flaubert complained that the progress thought needed to bring France out of the dark ages resulted in "everything [. . .] becoming mongrelized" in the modern city; "[t]here are no more courtesans, just as there are no more saints."[26] Emma's ever-changing persona is indicative of the fickleness Flaubert found reproachful: as Romantic heroine, country wife, martyred religious woman, dandy and whore Emma "enfold[s] everything [. . .] in so complete an indifference [. . .] that one could no longer distinguish in her the charitable from the self-regarding impulse, depravity from virtue" (228). Types of women needed to be easily recognizable in order to be organized for the exchange between men that maintained the laws of the male symbolic.

However, as with Baudelaire, what repelled Flaubert socially became a productive motif in his work. This mongrelization of Emma creates a distance that will confound any clear conclusions on the matter of subjectivity and "knowablilty" of character (which would suggest a presence of the author's opinion in the work). Emma as a changing surface, as a changing disguise, suggests the technique Flaubert used to conceal the author's intent much in the way Baudelaire's use of changing personas did. As Benjamin points out, Baudelaire's strategy was to assume ever new forms: "Flâneur, apache, dandy, and ragpicker were so many roles to him. For the modern hero is no hero; he is a portrayer of heroes" (*The Writer*125). By these masks, the writer "preserved his incognito" and this "incognito was the law of his poetry." By adopting these guises, Baudelaire refuses to reveal himself to the reader and instead "conspires with language itself" to revolutionize it (126): bringing a new rhythm to poetry, one that resembles the "'jerky gate'" of the ragpicker (*Charles Baudelaire* 80), and a "very calculated disharmony between the image and the object."[27]

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[26] Gustave Flaubert "To Louise Colet," 1 June 1853, *The Letters*, 186-187.

Similarly, the mystery of Emma was important to Flaubert who felt the emotion and subjectivity of the author should have no place in the work except in the form. Emma's disguise becomes a motif with which Flaubert pioneered the development of the indirect voice. The blurred boundaries between the direct speech of its characters, the voice of the omniscient narrator, and the internal thoughts of Emma (and the other characters), confounds any clear authorial position in the text, and the subject/object relationship.

In terms of establishing a modernist aesthetic, the most important aspect of Emma's gender ambiguity is that it problematizes the mimetic function of art.

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[27] Benjamin uses examples from Baudelaire. Cf. Benjamin "The night thickened like a partition" (98) and "We hastily steal a clandestine pleasure/Which we squeeze very hard like an old orange" (*Charles Baudelaire*, fn 94) 98.

Reproducing from nature is the first stake in mimesis and, Irigaray suggests, women are the ones who "maintain, thus [. . .] make possible, the resource of mimesis for men," for the logos ("The Power," *This Sex* 77). However, the urban woman disrupts what is thought to be natural, and thus the contract between logos and its resource; therefore, a new poetics of form must be found to address this fissure. While Emma is an "un-natural" woman, she is not a freak of nature: her guise and mimicry underscore the constructedness of woman that undermines the mimetic conventions of representational art.

Emma as a combination of surface and mobility makes her the personification of what is at the core of Flaubert's poetics: his belief that "*ideas* are action." This is why, as he says, his prose can remain energetic for "fifty pages in a row without [there being] a single event."[28] With the character Emma Bovary we see the flâneur move away from its definition as a socio-historical figure and towards its function as a metaphor for the restless engagement with form. Flaubert's realism is *not* about holding a mirror to the details of life, but about getting language close to thought: its energy, rhythm and linguistic diversity. Because Emma's action is so constrained, her flânerie is largely composed of mental activity.[29] This makes her the perfect vehicle for textual flânerie, as her physical constraint allows emphasis to be taken off narrative action. Textual experimentation (that finds its parallel in Emma's rebellion against her constraint) can, then, be thrown into relief. Flaubert was concerned with form above all else; he says that "[e]verything is a question of style, or rather of form, of presentation."[30] Although there is little action in the following narrative passage, it is nevertheless imbued with an intense energy derived from the image closing in around Emma: our focus moves from the walls, to the table, to Emma in her stationary place, until, in our reading which Flaubert turns into a fetish, we are complicit in Emma's entrapment—though she stabs away at, or writes in protest against (depending on the translation), the narrowing image of her life:

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[28] Gustave Flaubert, "To Louise Colet," 15 Jan. 1853, *The Letters*, 179-180.

[29] It is significant that Emma finds a community of female flâneurs in the women of history and fiction who were travellers and flâneurs of a sort, as it suggests flânerie is an imaginative as well as writerly and readerly practice: Joan of Arc stands out for Emma "like [a] comet [. . .] upon the dark immensity of history" (50). She "authors" the lives of other girls from her convent who have not married into the country; they are probably "[l]iving in town, amid the noise of the streets, the hum of the theatre crowd, the bright lights of the ballroom – the sort of life that opens the heart and the senses" (57). Emma names her greyhound Djali, which is the name of Esmeralda's dog in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. Esmeralda was a gypsy of the streets and a favourite of the Parisian crowd. Djali represents Emma's mental flânerie: "[h]er mind roved aimlessly

> But it was above all the meal-times that were unbearable to her, in this small room on the ground-floor, with its smoking stove, its creaking door, the walls that sweated, the damp flags; all the bitterness in life seemed served up on her plate, and with the smoke of the boiled beef there rose from her secret soul whiffs of sickliness. Charles was a slow eater; she played with a few nuts, or, leaning on her elbow, amused herself with drawing lines along the oilcloth table-cover with the point of her knife. (trans.Aveling 66)[31]

The depiction of Emma's combined resignation and protest, the indeterminate line between Emma's internal deep disgust, and an external view of a mundane moment of domestic life, together suggest a repressed but evasive female imaginary. However, we see how this repression provides an urgency to the style as the passage is made up of only

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hither and thither, like her greyhound" (57). Most importantly, Emma reads George Sand and seeks in her writing the "vicarious gratification of her own desires" (71).

[30] Gustave Flaubert, "To Louise Colet," 27 Dec. 1852, *The Letters*, 178-179.

[31] For aesthetic reasons I have used a secondary English translation of this passage. The primary English translation I am using does not site a translator.

two sentences, and many clauses, that provide the movement and rhythm of textual flânerie.

Flaubert wrote to Louise Colet that "[e]ach individual piece of work contains its own innate poetics, and each of these must be discovered"[32]This approach to writing-as-process anticipates the modernism of Woolf that was still over a half-century to come, and even the late modernism of Charles Olson whose "projective verse" carries echoes of Flaubert's own practice: "[f]rom the moment [the poet] ventures into FIELD COMPOSITION–put himself in the open—he can go by no track other than the one the poem under hand declares, for itself"("Projective Verse," *Selected* 16).

Emma (with her desire for a subjectivity defined by mobility) can be viewed as a vehicle for a writerly process that evades a surrender to convention. However, Emma fails, where Flaubert succeeds, in finding a form. Emma's introduction into and departure from the story make it clear that her passage through life is a series of deals made between men that support the male, rather than a female, symbolic. When Emma is passed from her father's house to her husband's the moment when Emma decides to marry is notably absent; instead, consent is given, after proof of Emma's virginity is secured, through a code made by the window shutters, the agreed upon language of father and suitor. Gerwin notes that Emma's death near the end of the novel brings us back to the containment of women for the sake of perpetuating a male economy. Emma's body is guarded by her husband as though it is property in an encasement "which can only be described as a prison of increasing fortification: a triple-coffin of oak inside mahogany inside lead." This encasement locks Emma within a story "that was never hers" and ensures the continued absorption of the feminine back into the masculine (Gerwin 8). That such a willful character is able to be exchanged and contained by a number of rather feckless men underscores the fact that this suppression is not the success of particular individuals, but indicative of a Law that orders society.

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[32] Gustave Flaubert, "To Louise Colet," 29 Jan. 1854, *The Letters*, 211-215.

Nevertheless, Emma's struggle is an important early example of female flânerie as a metaphor for an ongoing rebellious force in language; Emma, when she is being prepared for her burial—displayed like a Romantic heroine, dressed in her white wedding dress, her hair splayed out on the pillow—manages one last moment of protest: as her head is being tilted "a stream of dark liquid poured from her mouth, as though she were vomiting" (342). This image is suggestive of many things: Flaubert's own rejection of Romanticism, the waste of modernity that exposes the illusion of the dream-city. In terms of the articulation of the female imaginary Beth Gerwin reads it this way:

> [t]hough it is not defined, the black liquid recalls [. . .] "[t]he disgusting taste of ink" [. . .] that Emma sensed in her mouth as one of the earliest effects of the poison. In other words, this graphic moment presents Emma, who is beyond her romantic and futile letter-writing, inscribing in her own body's ink the manifesto of her life, a black and indelible imprint on the white dress of her domestic imprisonment. It is a letter that she is sending back to the world of the living, the world of her disappointment and of the closed economy of women's movement, the world in which she had no discursive subject position. (8)

Ironically, Emma's lack of subject position also suggests Flaubert's refusal to take a position in the work, which opens the way for all kinds of breaks from tradition. He says "[a]rt is not interested in the personality of the artist. So much the worse for him if he doesn't like red or green or yellow: all colors are beautiful, and his task is to use them";[33] this, for Flaubert as for Baudelaire, foregrounds the formal, poetic possibilities of the work. As with Baudelaire, Flaubert wanted to achieve a poetic-prose: "[a] good prose sentence should be like a good line of poetry—[. . .] just as rhythmic, just as sonorous." [34] As with Baudelaire's flâneur, Emma as a poetic figure in language invites analysis but is never perfectly understood. Emma, therefore, remains a site for an ongoing re-evaluation of the subject. However, Flaubert goes further than Baudelaire in his attack on the unified subject. The (then) outrageous choice to make a provincial woman the hero of his story, a figure who socially has no subject position, radically troubles the whole notion of the human being as the centre of knowledge. This makes Emma an important link between the male flâneur of nineteenth century humanism, and the female flâneur of twentieth century feminist-postmodernism.

III. Virginia Woolf

Emma's mimicry, besides allowing her access to public space, complicates the simple contract Parkhurst Ferguson sees existing between women and capital: she claims that women's desire to shop compromises the detachment from the market that distinguishes the true flâneur. ("The *Flâneur*," *The* Flâneur 27); While her voracious spending has brought about her downfall, Emma sees her tragedy to be, not the loss of her material possessions, but the loss of her freedom that bankruptcy has ensured. When she returns to the country, destitute, the sight of her house paralyzes her but she must go to it: "[w]here else was there?"(315). She responds to this fate with a fantasy of cruel footwork: as she strides rapidly towards Charles' home, scanning the empty horizon with tears of rage in her eyes, she thinks that "[s]he would have liked to hit men, to spit in their faces, to trample on them" (315).

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[33] Gustave Flaubert, "To Louise Colet," 26 Jul. 1852, *The Letters*, 166-167.
[34] Gustave Flaubert, "To Louise Colet," 22 Jul. 1852, *The Letters*, 166.

Her failure to realize her true desire is marked by her habitation of space that is antithetical to that of the flâneur's: Emma sits listlessly by the window; half crazed, she is walked round and round the garden by Charles. Charles represents not only the country but also the common man that threatens to absorb Emma into the mediocrity of the masses (the flâneur's biggest fear): Charles' conversation is described as "commonplace as street pavement, and everyone's ideas trooped through it in their everyday garb without exciting emotion, laughter or thought. He had never had the curiosity, he said, while he lived in Rouen, to go to the theatre to see the actors from Paris" (Aveling 41). Here we see the merger of Flaubert's and Emma's worst fears: Emma is constrained by a captor who is imaginatively bankrupt. Since Emma's true tragedy is her imaginative and physical restraint, her true desire must be for mobility and radical subjectivity. . .not to shop.

This mimicry, and thus subversion, of the public woman's seemingly inextricable relationship to commercial exchange is taken to the extreme in a final example of foundational female flânerie. In Virginia Woolf's essay "Street Haunting" the desire to buy a pencil becomes the premise for an evening winter walk across London. The essay begins:

> No one perhaps has ever felt passionately towards a lead pencil. But there are circumstances in which it can become supremely desirable to possess one; moments when we are set upon having an object, an excuse for walking half

> across London between tea and dinner. . .so when the desire comes upon us to go street rambling the pencil does for a pretext, and getting up we say: 'Really I must buy a pencil,' as if under cover of this excuse we could indulge safely in the greatest pleasure of town life in winter–rambling the streets of London. (1)

This passage displays the key elements of female flânerie that are also found in the flânerie of Sand and Bovary: mimicry, guise, or in this case a "cover," of one desire that affords a sense of safety to experience the pleasure of another. A perhaps simple but important distinction between female and male flânerie is that, while male flânerie is defined by an absence of pleasure, or a torturous one at best, female flânerie is *marked* by pleasure: the very thing denied women in the male symbolic, as it threatens "the underpinnings of logical operations" (Irigaray, " The Power" *This Sex* 77).

Male flânerie expresses an anxiety over the loss, or potential loss, of the image-object that maintains the logical subject/object relationship. Female flânerie is the expression of pleasure in the lack of control over this subject/object relationship: the female flâneur-as-shopper does not "desire the object spread before her and act [. . .] upon that desire" (Parkhurst Ferguson, "The *Flâneur*" 27) because she is, in fact, a window-shopper. This involves humouring the Law of the Market with a mock intent-to-shop that resembles the male flâneur's intent-to-write: an act that he constantly defers. Both suggest a resistance to the eventual confrontation with convention. The space of mock-intention allows for fantasy and the constant flux of mental activity that resists having to ever posit anything, come to any conclusion. However, unlike male flânerie, window shopping allows various fantasies to be entertained and released, entertained and released again, with no anxiety of possession since the image-object was not the goal to begin with. This subversion of the shopper distances the woman from the market.

Ironically, it is the male flâneur-poet, who claims to have no relationship to the socially sanctioned consumer behaviour of women and the bourgeoisie in general, who is closely tied to the marketplace. When Baudelaire famously said: "[w]hat is Art? Prostitution,"[35] he certainly meant that the artist compromise his art when he exposes his work to the marketplace.[36] However, Baudelaire is as much a consumer as he is consumed. He physically enters the crowded metropolis which surrounds him and fills him with an intoxication that enables him to consume the unexpected object as an intense image. Therefore, once the poet enters the marketplace, the image becomes like a commodity. Like a commodity, the value of the image-object is heightened by the anxiety of production and possession that resembles that of the marketplace. As Benjamin notes, the power of the Baudelairean image is contingent on its fleetingness: "[t]he delight of the urban poet is love—not at first sight, but at last sight. It is a farewell forever which coincides in the poem with the moment of enchantment" (*Charles Baudelaire* 125).

Like the market item, the image gains its value through its rarity and its novelty. Baudelaire describes the flâneur-artist working with a speed and violence "as though he was afraid the images might escape him" ("The Painter" 402). Benjamin says that

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[35] "Squibs and Crackers," *Intimate Journals* (Connecticut: Hyperion Press, Inc., 1930) 29.

[36] Benjamin quotes an early poem of Baudelaire's that did not make it into *LesFleurs du mal* to illustrate the connection he makes between prostitute and poet. Cf. *Charles Baudelaire* : " In order to have shoes she has sold her soul; but the Good Lord would laugh if, close to that vile person, I played the hypocrite and mimicked loftiness, I who sell my thoughts and want to be an author" (34).

"[a]nything about which one knows that one soon will not have it around becomes an image" (*Charles Baudelaire* 87), and presumes Baudelaire's obsession with the image came from his writing in a city that was beginning to disappear due to mass architectural rebuilding that would facilitate capitalism over revolution. And so, Baudelaire's style marks the loss of the Old Paris, and is also conditioned by the spirit of capitalism, in as much as it resembles the fashion economy: the capture of the fleeting image. Baudelaire says the aim of the flâneur is "to extract from fashion the poetry that resides in its historical envelope, to distil the eternal from the transitory" ("The Painter" 402). No matter how de-stabilized Baudelaire's subject is, it is steadfastly the centre of his poetics trapped in a subject/object dynamic that resembles the anxious logic of the market with its final goal as possession.

Part of the way the female flâneur-as-window-shopper manages to preclude the goal of possession all together is by, to borrow Irigaray's term, remaining several. Removed from the subject/object dynamic, she does not feel the need to appropriate anything for herself:

> [o]wnership and property are doubtless quite foreign to the feminine [. . .].But not *nearness* [. . .]. Woman derives pleasure from what is *so near that she cannot have it, nor have herself.* She herself enters into a ceaseless exchange of herself with the other without any possibility of identifying either. This puts into question all prevailing economies: their calculations are irremediably stymied by woman's pleasure, as it increases indefinitely from its passage in and through the other. ("This Sex," *This Sex* 31)

The fantasy of the shopper, who tries on many hats, can be compared to Irigaray's notion of the feminine that is "the desire for the proximate rather than for (the) proper(ty)": being close to but not containing. This writing of women she says:

> tends to put the torch to fetish words, proper terms, well-constructed forms. This "style" does not privilege sight; instead, it takes each figure back to its source, which is among other things *tactile*. It comes back in touch with itself in the origin without ever constituting in it, constituting itself in it, as some sort of unity. *Simultaneity* is its "proper" aspect—a proper(ty) that is never fixed in the possible identity-to-self of some form or other. It is always *fluid*.
>
> ("The Power," *This Sex* 79)

In Woolf's essay this trope of the window shopper is used to suggest proximity without possession of either object, or position in language. In the case of Woolf's female flâneur, as in the case of Sand's and Flaubert's, we see the figure taken back to its source, to the fluid body, with a tactile experience of costume, that becomes fantasy, that in turn breaks open the conventions of language: especially in terms of how the female subject is constituted in language. We see in the following examples from Woolf's essay how Irigaray's intermediate phase of mimicry begins to make visible "the operation of the feminine in language" (Irigaray "The Power" *This Sex* 76) which meshes the female body, sex, and the imagination.

In "Street Haunting" the subversion of the female shopper, and subsequent development of the female flâneur, is played out through the dynamic of an escape *from* domestic objects—that are invested with memories of commercial exchange and associated with a too-familiar sense of self—and fantastical engagement *with* objects in the street. In the domestic realm a static memory, unlike Baudelaire's distilled image, is portrayed negatively, as a commodity, or capital itself: [i]n "one's own room [. . .] we sit surrounded by objects which [. . .] enforce the memories of our own experience." These include, for example, the purchasing of a bowl in Mantua that involves an unpleasant bartering exchange with a sinister old woman. This bowl then seems to carry the ill will with it back to the hotel where a fight breaks out between innkeeper and wife. This moment, Woolf tells us "was stabilized, stamped like a coin indelibly among a million that slipped by imperceptibly" (1-2).

Contrast this experience of the stabilized image-commodity with the act of perception that belongs to female flânerie—window shopping that subverts the conventional link of the public woman to the market:

> With no thought of buying, the eye is sportive and generous; it creates; it adorns; it enhances. Standing out in the street, one may build up all the chambers of an imaginary house and furnish them at one's will with sofa, table, carpet. That rug will do for the hall. That alabaster bowl shall stand on a carved table in the window. Our merrymaking shall be reflected in that thick round mirror. But, having built and furnished the house, one is happily under no obligation to possess it; one can dismantle it in the twinkling of an eye, and build and furnish another house with other chairs and other glasses. (7)

Here the female window shopper is like the flâneur in that she makes a home of the street. As Benjamin tells us, the flâneur "is as much at home among the facades of houses as a citizen is in his four walls. To him the shiny, enamelled signs of businesses are at least as good a wall ornament as an oil painting is to a bourgeois in his salon [. . .]

the terraces of cafes are the balconies from which he looks down on his household after his work is done" (*Charles Baudelaire* 37). However, since woman is, conventionally, a metonym for the home itself, this fantasy of building and rebuilding the public house, the entertainment of and release of the image, leads directly into a fantasy of a multiple sense of self.

This fantasy is aided by the female disguise; Woolf says: "let us indulge ourselves at the antique jewellers, among the trays of rings and the hanging necklaces. Let us choose those pearls, for example, and then imagine how, if we put them on, life would be changed" (7). And the scene does, instantly, change: it is not six o'clock on a winter night, but between two and three in the morning in June. Like a dandy, the narrator preens her feathers in a lavish scene that invokes and mocks the aristocracy. Just as quickly, the narrator is pulled back to where she is: walking to the Strand to buy a pencil. This fantasy leads her to question the authorial and unified subject. The female flâneur does not have the sense of authority of subjectivity the male flâneur does: her fantasy leads her to ask:

> Is the true self this which stands on the pavement in January, or that which bends over the balcony in June? Am I here, or am I there? Or is the true self neither this nor that, neither here nor there, but something so varied and wandering that it is only when we give the rein to its wishes and let it take its way unimpeded that we are indeed ourselves? (8-9)

As well as being agents of fantasy, the objects in the street are notably second-hand, and thus recede even further from their original market value, and are hallowed out of their original purpose. Instead, they are seen as objects of material history. Woolf's window shopper of second hand items may be compared to Baudelaire's ragpicker. As figures that search for booty in the commercial centres, without engaging in commercial exchange, both become metaphors for the writer whose milieu is the metropolis but who, nevertheless, seeks images, forms, and methods that resist the modern trend towards the commodification (standardization) of language. Benjamin quotes Baudelaire when making this analogy:

> "Here we have a man whose job it is to gather the day's refuse in the capital. Everything that the big city has thrown away, everything it has lost, everything it has scorned, everything it has crushed underfoot he catalogues and collects" [. . .]. This description is one extended metaphor for the poetic method, as Baudelaire practiced it. Ragpicker and poet: both are concerned with refuse.
> (Benjamin, *The Writer* 108)

While the new and complete object (and this wholeness includes not only its form but also its purpose and traceable history) "is useless as it cannot be put to a new purpose" and so is "inert and dead," Woolf's second-hand item, like the ragpicker's waste or broken object, "is valuable and alive because it can undergo constant transformation or renewal" (Parsons 176). Thus, the second hand object appeals to the female window shopper as it is the agent of her own multiplicity through fantasy.

As Parsons points out, this dispersion of the subject involves a generosity of feeling toward the crowd that is not available to the male flâneur, but is part of an effort towards community in feminist poetics: the "modernist archetype of the 'singular antagonist against the city, an isolated individual consciousness observing the urban scene'"[37] contrasts Woolf's relation to the city which is "less one of solitude than of a merger as people in the crowd mingle" (170). Referencing Woolf's famous essay, which uses the motif of walking as thinking towards a private space, or room, in which to compose a female imaginary, the narrator of "Street Haunting" now recognizes the equal necessity of public space, as community, to disrupt any stagnation of identity (a central concern of feminist discourse). She says: "[a]s we step out of the house [. . .] we shed the self our friends know us by and become part of that vast republican army of anonymous trampers, whose society is so agreeable after the solitude of one's own room" (1).

This crowd of individual consciousnesses is unlike Baudelaire's crowd which is abstract.[38] For Woolf, the crowd is made up of figures, each of which is a potential flâneur. This sense of the crowd is represented in the metaphor of books in an antiquarian bookstore. Books themselves are shown to be flâneurs:

> Second-hand books are wild books, homeless books; they have come together in vast flocks of variegated feather, and have a charm which the domesticated volumes of the library lack. Besides, in this random miscellaneous company we may rub against some complete stranger who will, with luck, turn into the best friend we have in the world. (9)

These "individuals" are described as travellers distinguished by an air of shabbiness and desertion (9). The affinity the female flâneur has for second-hand books gestures towards this tactile experience of language Irigaray discusses. It also suggests the central argument of this essay: that the flâneur is primarily a figure of language.

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[37] Catherine Broderick, "Cities of Her Own Invention: Urban Iconology in *Cities of the Interior*" qtd. in Suzannne Nalbantian (ed), 33-51, qtd. in Parsons. 170.

[38] A lengthy discussion of Baudelaire's metaphor of the crowd will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Baudelaire finds a close affinity between the marginal figures of the city (such as the organ grinder) and the poet-flâneur. Woolf uses this street figure to suggest the female flâneur-writer's experience within the literary tradition, while simultaneously alluding to the end of the previous century's traditions:

> glancing round the bookshop, we make [. . .] sudden capricious friendships with the unknown and the vanished whose only record is, for example, this little book of poems, so fairly printed, so finely engraved, too, with a portrait of the author. For he was a poet and drowned untimely, and his verse, mild as it is and formal and sententious, sends forth still a frail fluty sound like that of a piano organ played in some back street resignedly by an old Italian organ-grinder in a corduroy jacket.(10)

Parsons concludes that "[i]n 'Street Haunting' Woolf recognizes that this experience of dispersion through others can turn onto itself to finally destroy self-identity" or, at best "lead to a bonding with a universal identity of Woman" (170). She presumably comes to this conclusion because Woolf finds comfort, after the great escape and pleasure of street haunting, in the return home to "old possessions, the old prejudices" (15).

However, this satisfaction seems ambiguous, and almost sardonic, if we consider that the relief of the return of the self ("which has been blown about at so many street corners") to its familiar setting comes only after it has "battered like a moth at the flame of so many inaccessible lanterns, sheltered and enclosed" (15). The moth, symbolically the soul seeking the godhead, is bared access to the flame. Regardless of how one wishes to read the symbol (in the context of women's access to language) what is suggested is that a return to the familiar comes only after a failure of desire on the part of the "moth" to actualize itself. Therefore the satisfaction of unity, the comfort of familiar forms in the home, is suspect, as earlier Woolf told us that "[c]ircumstances compel unity; for convenience' sake a man must be a whole"; and this unity is associated with the "good citizen" who "when he opens his door in the evening must be banker, golfer, husband, father; not a nomad wandering the desert, a mystic staring at the sky, a debauchee in the slums of San Francisco, a soldier heading a revolution, a pariah howling with scepticism and solitude" (9), or any other number of figures who share the qualities of the flâneur.

In the end, after haunting the boutiques, the market, and handling many objects for sale, the female-flâneur returns home with nothing but a lead pencil. Ironically, it is at this moment that the essay ends. The words we have just read have unfolded as the action of the flâneur has: she walks through the city as though she already had the pencil she needed. Her writing must be, then, even if it is retrospective of a walk that has just occurred, considered as the real act of flânerie: the present moment of writing, writing as it happens. Writing-as-walking, with its sudden shifts of focus, and untidy transitions, is close to the process of thinking unimpeded by any real intent (the mock intent of buying a pencil).

The Poetics of Female Flânerie

By introducing the motifs of movement and mimicry and guise into a theory of female flânerie, and by discussing a number of historical works of literary female flânerie that exhibit these motifs, this introduction hopefully has set the groundwork for a discussion of flânerie as a linguistic and textual practice: one belonging to the writer and the reader. This aim is connected to the previously discussed premise associated with the writings of a number of feminist writers in the late 1970s and 80s: that you can't take language for granted; "[w]riting is always and forever a social practice," and " 'discourse' isn't something you walk away from when you set down your pen" (Mouré, "Breaking Boundaries" 18).

In the coming chapters, I will relate this self-conscious practice of textual flânerie, in which one considers how the structures of language shapes our perceptions, to a discussion that is taken up in almost every theory of the flâneur, that of the city as a text to be read and written. As Parsons notes, this formulation is almost cliché (*Streetwalking* 1); however, it is a useful place to begin thinking about the way women's relationship to the language of city space and the language of the text are similar. I will look at the formulation of the city-as-text in reverse: in each chapter to follow, I will discuss a different work of literary flânerie, examining each one's poetic process in order to slowly build up a theory of flânerie that foregrounds the materiality of language. This theory will consider the text as an architectural space to be traversed, and the flâneur-poet's body as a site for the intersection of language, city, and sensory experience—as language moves in it and over the space of the page. For the flâneur of the text, the process through the space of the page is winding and multidirectional; as with the city figure, movement is determined by intuition rather than plan. I will argue, then, that textual flânerie is the poetic function working in the creation of a text: is composed of the poetic rhythm of a work that throws the material text into relief to meet with the perceiving body of the poet-flâneur writing, and the reader-flâneur reading.

Chapter 2. Passante as Female Flâneur: The Shocked Text of Solvej Balle

A une passante

La rue assourdissante autour de moi hurlait.
Longue, mince, en grand deuil, douleur majestueuse,
Une femme passa, d'une main fastueuse
Soulevant, balançant le feston et l'ourlet;

Agile et noble, avec sa jambe de statue.
Moi, je buvais, crispé comme un extravagant,
Dans son œil, ciel livide où germe l'ouragan,
La douceur qui fascine et le plaisir qui tue.

Un éclair . . . puis la nuit!—Fugitive beauté
Dont le regard m'a fait soudainement renâitre,
Ne te verrai-je plus que dans l'éternité?

Ailleurs, bien loin d'ici! jamais *peut-être!*
Car j'ignore où tu fuis, tu ne sais où je vais,
Ô toi que j'eusse aimée, ô toi qui le savais!

To a Woman Passing By

Around me roared the nearly deafening street.
Tall, slim, in mourning, in majestic grief,
A woman passed me, with a splendid hand
Lifting and swinging her festoon and hem;

Nimble, and stately, statuesque of leg.
I, shaking like an addict, from her eye,
Black sky, spawner of hurricanes, drank in
Sweetness that fascinates, pleasure that kills.

One lightening flash . . . then night! Sweet fugitive
Whose glance has made me suddenly reborn,
Will we not meet again this side of death?

Far from this place! too late! *never* perhaps!
Neither one knowing where the other goes,
O you I might have loved, as well you know![39]

—Charles Baudelaire

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[39] *The Flowers of Evil*, trans. James McGowan (Oxford: OUP, 1993) 188;189.

Janet Wolff ends her influential essay "The Invisible *Flâneuse*: Women and the Literature of Modernity" with the suggestion that what is missing from the existing literature on modernity is "the very different nature of the experience of those women who *did* appear in the public arena: a poem written by 'la femme passante' [the female passerby] about her encounter with Baudelaire, perhaps" (47). With this suggestion Wolff implicitly calls for a literary female flânerie of a realist tradition: by "experience" Wolff means an "account of life" (*Feminine Sentences* 47); calling on the passante for such a description indicates that Wolff sees a transparency between art and sociology. Such a position leads to a misreading of Baudelaire's passante; she is, in his work, the central figure of his shock-based poetics, and thus, I will argue, essentially a poetic trope.

Wolff's assessment of Baudelaire's passante, as the object of the poet's gaze, reduces the figure to a physiognomic type: she is a prostitute; a respectable woman of the time would not have met a man's gaze in public.[40] This, according to Wolff's criteria, procures any possible reading of the passante as a female flâneur since the prostitute does not have the social remove or discretion necessary for independent observation. Deborah Parsons, however, challenges this limited reading of the passante,[41] finding a complexity in the passante's elusiveness, both in terms of her dress and her mobility—an anonymity and transience that she shares with the flâneur: "[c]rucial to the idea of the *passante* is precisely the fact that it is impossible to define her as a type and that as a result she is the most perfect reflection of the characteristics of the urban narrator-observer" (73); as a "moving figure" she "subverts the traditional conception of the female as possessable object. The *passante* is a fleeting figure observed but with the ability to evade being fixed by the male gaze" (64). This elusiveness complicates the returned look of the passante which, Parsons argues, distinguishes her from Baudelaire's other female figures: with it, there is the potential for a reversal of power and a multiple and shifting identity that allows women writers of the early twentieth century, like Virginia Woolf, and Dorothy Richardson, to "manipulat[e] the image of the *passante* to express a female perspective on the city"(73).

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[40] Deborah L. Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the city, and Modernity* 73.

[41] The physiologies of the 19th century were character sketches designed to help people assess the profession, character and background of the passer-by without any factual knowledge. "They investigated the human types that a person taking a look at the marketplace might encounter. From the itinerant street vendor of the boulevards to the dandy in the opera-house foyer, there was not a figure of Paris life that was not sketched by a *physiologue.*" According to Benjamin, the flâneur was a figure that signified a literature that broke from this tradition. "It cared little about the definition of types; rather, it investigated the functions which are particular to the masses in a big city." Walter Benjamin *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire* 67-71. Therefore, determining the passante's vocation based on her behaviour (her look) seems

However, while Parsons challenges Wolff's simplification of the figure, she minimizes an important point intrinsic to Wolff's argument: Baudelaire's passante remains the object of the male gaze. Although Parsons admits this, she does not acknowledge that the passante's object position is essential to the poetic function of Bauelaire's passerby, which, I will argue later, is the figure's primary function. Therefore, in her desire to have the passante embody a female perspective of the city, Parsons, like Wolff, omits a discussion of Baudelaire's poetic process. Because of this omission, Parsons fails to construct a crucial step in aligning the passante with the female flâneur, and unwittingly re-enforces some patriarchal values intrinsic to the aesthetics of modernity.

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antithetical to Baudelaire's work since the subject of the poem is not a specific social type, but rather the function of the gaze itself.

By locating the potential of a female flâneur in the passante's returned look and visual elusiveness Parsons privileges visual experience as a way to establish female agency; in so doing she adopts the dominant male modernist aesthetic in order to develop a female perspective of the city. Nowhere in her argument does she challenge modernity's hierarchy of the senses in which sight is primary: "[m]odern aesthetics claimed that vision was superior to the other senses because of its detachment from its objects" (Owens, "The Discourse of Others" 70). The privileging of sight involved sexual privileging as well in that it coincided with the binary of woman as detached image/object and man as the agent of the look. We see this strategy of perception working in the opening of Baudelaire's poem "*A une passante*" ["To a Woman Passing By"] where sound is presented as inferior to sight: in the confusing din of the street the striking image of a woman appears; Woman, as a sign in the male symbolic system (and through her sexual difference) maintains the erotic separation needed for the creation of Baudelaire's allegorical image.[42] Therefore, we are left wondering what kind of freedom is afforded Baudelaire's passante as an elusive, decoporealized object.

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[42] Owens, in his discussion of the priority the modern world grants to vision, and how this prioritization is linked to sexual privilege, references Freud's articulation of "the 'discovery of castration' around a sight: sight of a phallic presence in the boy and sight of a phallic absence in the girl." Sexual difference, then, is understood, initially and primarily, through sight. This difference is first experienced as a traumatic sighting; we can link the trauma of "castration" to Baudelaire's shocking image by considering the image next to a quotation Owens references from Freud's paper on "Fetishism." Owens says that "the male child often takes the last visual impression prior to the 'traumatic' sighting as a substitute for the mother's 'missing' penis." This image is of the foot or the shoe that becomes a fetish due to the circumstance of "'the inquisitive boy [who] peer[s] up at the woman's legs towards her genitals [. . .]; the underlinen so often adopted as a fetish reproduces the scene of undressing, the last moment in which the woman could still be regarded as phallic'" (71). Baudelaire's speaker is reminiscent of this inquisitive boy when he describes the grand woman "Lifting and swinging her festoon and hem" to expose her "statuesque leg." This is the last image of the poem before the "pleasure that

If women's initiation into the world of flânerie is through an exchange of a fleeting look that maintains the history of male scopic authority, a distinctly female flânerie must, as was argued in chapter one, involve an inclusion of the other senses and a consideration of how the materiality of the body figures in the production of textual flânerie. As Luce Irigaray observes:

> Investment in the look is not privileged in women as in men. More than the other senses, the eye objectifies and masters. It sets at a distance, maintains the distance. In our culture, the predominance of the look over smell, taste, touch, hearing, has brought about an impoverishment of bodily relations. . . The moment the look dominates, the body loses its materiality."
>
> (Untitled interview qtd. in Owens, 70)

Owens interprets this to mean that the perceived body is transformed into an image, but given Irigaray's many other discussions on the body,[43] it could also mean that the perceiving body loses touch with its own materiality. The poet-flâneur's

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kills." Through the image of Woman, male castration anxiety is, then, linked to the shock and anxiety of modernity. It is this castration anxiety that defines Baudelaire's modern hero. We can see this in the language of dismemberment used by Jennings, when quoting Benjamin, to describe Benjamin's sense of the modern hero who "has, piece by piece, been stripped of his possessions and security [. . .] and forced to take refuge in the street. [. . .] Baudelaire is rendered defenseless against the shocks of modern life. His heroism thus consists in his constant willingness to have the character of his age mark and scar his body. 'The resistance that modernity offers to the natural productive élan of an individual is out of all proportion to his strength. It is understandable if a person becomes exhausted and takes refuge in death.'" In the poem, we see in the speaker's address to the passante this very entertainment of death; thus, the speaker's "last visual impression" of woman before "castration" is an allegory for a "[h]eroism [that] assumes the form of mourning for a loss that has not yet occurred but always threatens," a notion that Jennings says "Benjamin places at the centre of his reading" of Baudelaire. Michael W. Jennings, introduction, *The Writer*. 16

[43] See, for example, *This Sex Which is Not One,* trans. Catherine Porter (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985).

understanding of subjectivity did not include a sense of materiality: perhaps because he controlled the gaze while remaining incognito—a strategy necessary to counter the popular practice of the physiognomists.[44]

Ironically, then, despite the fact that Baudelaire's flâneur is concerned with the dissolve of literal and figurative distance (what Benjamin calls the "aura") between the perceiver and image, he must retain *some* space between himself and his visual object in order to remain the master of his subjective look. Benjamin sees Baudelaire's work representative of a modern aesthetics precisely because of its attack on "auratic" art. What Benjamin means by auratic art is complex; however, Jennings summarizes it nicely as: "[a] strange tissue of space and time: the unique appearance of a distance, however near it may be [. . .]. This distance is [. . .] primarily a psychological inapproachability—an authority—claimed on the basis of the work's position within a tradition." The distant work

> attains a cultural status that lends it a sacrosanct inviolability. It also remains in the hands of a privileged few. The auratic work exerts claims to power that parallel and reinforce the larger claims to political power of the class for whom such objects are most meaningful: the bourgeoisie [. . .]. It is not just that auratic art, with its ritually certified representational strategies, poses no threat to the dominant class, but that the sense of authenticity, authority, and permanence projected by the auratic work of art represents an important cultural substantiation of the claims to power of the dominant class. (Jennings 22-23)

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[44] See footnote 35.

If auric art is that which returns a familiar, comfortable, unproblematic gaze that maintains an authoritative distance, the look of the passante is the uncomfortable blank stare that breaks this effect of distance. However, from a feminist perspective, this sense of presence is misleading since the direct look of the passante is not synonymous with the dissolve of the male gaze (another kind of aura), nor does the mutual look suggest an equality and kinship between passante and male flâneur.

It is important to note that although the passante's eyes are turned to the observer in the poem there is almost a blindness to them incurred by the poet's description of them; Jean-Paul Sartre writes in *Being and Nothingness* that "'[i]t is never when eyes are looking at you that you can find them beautiful or ugly, that you can remark on their colour [. . .T]he Other's look hides his eyes; he seems to go *in front of them*'";[45] the passante's eyes, however, *are* described, and so do not do their own looking; they are a stormy "black sky:" a tempestuous site suggestive of a co-mingling of (fleeting) movement and eternal sameness, qualities that Baudelaire says define modernity. These black eyes do not seem, to me, to be any less "blind" than those of Baudelaire's other women: In "Le *Serpent qui danse*" ["The Dancing Serpent"] the dancing-woman's eyes are presented as "two cold stones" where "nothing is revealed"; in " '*Je te donne ces vers*. . .'" ["I give to you these verses. . ."] the woman we presume to be Baudelaire's prostitute lover, who has been judged "mean and hard," has "eyes of jet."[46] The passante's eyes, as the "spawner of hurricanes," suggest clouds, a recurring motif in Baudelaire's poetry; Benjamin reads Baudelaire's "cloud formations" as "the symbol of sensuality spiritualized"[47]: in other words, as the mixing of the earthly and the eternal which defined Baudelaire's poetics of The Modern.

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[45] Sartre qtd. in Martin Jay's *Downcast Eyes: The Degeneration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* 288.

[46] Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil* 57; 81.

Therefore, although Parsons detects a transfer of power to the passante when the presumably male speaker is "disturbed by the returned glance" (72), Benjamin's observation that Baudelaire's imagery is produced by the subject's "submission to the shock experience of modern life in its full force" (Jennings 21), suggests that the challenge of the returned look is more likely to be modern man's reckoning with the face of modernity. The passante "in mourning" and "majestic grief" is the embodiment of modernity itself if we consider her image in the poem next to Baudelaire's comments in his essay "The Salon of 1846": "[a]nd yet, has it not got its own beauty and native charm, this much abused frock-coat? Is it not the inevitable uniform of our suffering age, carrying on its very shoulders, black and narrow, the mark of perpetual mourning?" This modern dress is an expression of "poetic beauty, which is the expression of the public soul [. . .]. All of us are attending some funeral or other" (*Selected Writings* 105).

Griselda Pollock points out, in her study of the female gaze, that women's bodies are "the territory across which men artists claim their modernity and compete for leadership of the avant-garde" (76). Therefore, although Parsons associates female agency with the passante's look and retreat from the vision of the male observer, within Baudelaire's poetic system of signs the passante's escape is less likely to indicate an escape from the male symbolic than a reworking of it; the passante stands in for Baudelaire's particular avant-garde poetics. Her elusiveness and ambiguity make her the object with which Baudelaire's work defies the previous century's concern with centralized observation, the constant visibility of bodies, and the Enlightenment's project of " 'power through transparency' " (Foucault 154).

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[47] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* [J72a,5] 357.

Michel Foucault, in an interview on the perceived relationship between surveillance and power in late eighteenth century, says that moral and political order relied and the eradication of darkened architectural spaces (such as hospitals and prisons) that prevented the full visibility of things, such as illness and acts of crime.[48] In the nineteenth century the function of the crowd replaced that of architecture in eighteenth century. It became the blind for criminal behaviour, something Benjamin brings up in his discussion of the detective story.[49] More important to this discussion is how the crowd-as-darkness prevents the individual's process of internalizing the inspecting and illuminating gaze with which he can become "his own overseer," [. . .] exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself." (Foucault 155). Baudelaire's grieving, modern woman, as the sudden image, is antithetical to the eighteenth century's idealization of surveillance and control: the passante appears from, and disappears into, the "darkness" of the crowd. The poet's helplessness before the sudden image of Woman suggests Baudelaire's concern with breaking apart the power structures of reason. The modern hero must embrace and account for what he cannot rationalize in himself and in his social world.

The observer in the poem is shaken by an image that can be neither assimilated nor parried by his consciousness. The central images of Baudelaire's poetry, according to Benjamin, arise in cases where the "defensive mechanism fails—that is, the case[s] in which the shock is *not* parried by consciousness, but instead penetrates and deforms it" (Jennings 20). The shaking (deformed) subject's consciousness is thus reconstituted by an immediate image that is a clash of unresolved contradictions: the passante is a figure of the visible and the invisible, life and death, pleasure and grief, castration and sexuality. In this way, she is the motif that signals the dissolve of the aura: a failure of the male subject to see and know everything. However, this failure does not leave room for other subjectivities, but rather, becomes a quality of a new male subject: the uncertain, but nevertheless still patriarchal, modern hero.

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[48] Michel Foucault, "The Eye of Power" 146-165.

[49] "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire," *The Writer of Modern Life* 74-80.

The passante, as the primary figure of Baudelaire's "shock-driven poetic[s]" (Jennings 15), is, I will argue, the embodiment of the poetic gesture. She is symbolic of what Benjamin identifies as the isolated experience (*Erlebnis*): that which is neither retainable nor transmissible (20). As the object of the flâneur-poet's perception she is antithetical to the long experience (*Erfahrung*) which Jennings summarizes as "a coherent body of knowledge and wisdom that is not merely retainable in human memory but transmissible from generation to generation" (20). In Baudelaire's symbolic system, then, the female passer-by can be neither subject nor storyteller: she cannot be the custodian of the experiences of the modern urban woman.

Walter Benjamin discusses the poetic function of the isolated experience. From it we can understand the female passer-by as the trigger for the creative process, the modern muse:

> The greater the shock factor in particular impressions, the more vigilant consciousness has to be in screening stimuli; the more efficiently it does so, the less these impressions enter long experience [*Erfahrung*] and the more they

> correspond to the concept of isolated experience [*Erlebnis*]. Perhaps the special achievement of shock defense is the way it assigns an incident a precise point in time in consciousness, at the cost of the integrity of the incident's contents. This would be a peak achievement of the intellect; it would turn the incident into an isolated experience. Without reflection, there would be nothing but the sudden start, occasionally pleasant but usually distasteful, which, according to Freud, confirms the failure of the shock defense. Baudelaire has portrayed this process in a harsh image. He speaks of a duel in which the artist, just before being beaten, screams in fright. This duel is the creative process itself. (*The Writer* 178)

Benjamin argues that the figure of shock in Baudelaire's poetry strives to empty the content from the incident in the poem: the female passers-by appears and disappears before the poet in a moment which, like love at last sight, "coincides in the poem with the moment of enchantment" (*The Writer* 185).

What is missing from Parsons' discussion of the passer-by, and most feminist readings of the figure, is an interrogation of why the image of woman is, for Baudelaire, the primary figure of shock and, by extension, the poetic gesture. How does her image, as an isolated experience (*Erlebnis*), make woman a contained spectacle in terms of the aesthetics of the work, despite the fact that in the action of the poem the passante gets away? Parsons and Wolff both overlook the connection between Baudelaire's shock-based poetics and Woman as a contained image, despite the fact that this connection has continued, across disciplines, in the development of modern art forms. For example, Laura Mulvey notes in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," her influential essay on the male gaze, that "[t]he presence of woman is an indispensable element of spectacle in normal narrative film, yet her visual presence tends to work against the development of a story-line, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation" (19).

Parsons' argument for passante-as-flâneur relies solely on narrative examples. In the passages Parsons cites from Woolf and Richardson women, rather than passing men by in a single moment, are *followed* through the street. Parsons conflates the passer-by (the poetic image) with a more prosaic figure. Rather than embodying the experience of shock, Parsons' "passante" builds narrative suspense. Alternatively, Baudelaire's passante appears in "One lightening flash . . . then night!" The speaker in Baudelaire's poem may muse about where the passante goes, and whether they will meet again, but the power of the image is contingent on the "never" knowing. As Benjamin reminds us: "[t]he word 'jamais' marks the high point of the encounter, when the poet's passion seems to be frustrated but in reality bursts out of him like a flame. He is seared by this flame, but no phoenix arises from it" (*The Writer* 77).

The passante, although suggestive of many things, has a limited function in the poem in direct correlation to the sudden start that is the energy of the poem. She is a "sweet fugitive" to the Law that is artistic convention. Shock is not only a motif for the surrender to the condition of modern life, but also a function of modern allegory which, Benjamin says, "has to do, precisely in its destructive furor, with dispelling the illusion that proceeds from all 'given order,' whether of art or of life";[50] it suggests fragmentation, ruin, contradiction and the solitary experience.

Because the relationship between the poetics of shock and the image of the passante colludes in the symbolic control of women, for the passante to become the female flâneur there needs first to be an investigation and subversion of this motif, a re-working of the what the shock of the modern image means to the female gaze and constitution of the passante-as-female-flâneur. This would require attention to the fact that, as Pollock points out, in the history of art women readers and viewers of images have been made to "assume a masculine position," and, from it, view herself as an object. According to Mary Kelly, this "crisis of positionality" is particularly evident in women artists (and we can include the passante here as potential female artist-flâneur) because while she "actively takes up a passive aim" and becomes a picture of herself, "she must also account for the feeling she experiences as the artist, occupying what could be called the masculine position, as the subject of the look as an artist, as the subject of the look" ("Desiring Images"123). Therefore, the female gaze, unlike the male gaze, is a mingling of object and subject positions: the female spectator has, through the conditioning of art, internalized her object position that she is, as a viewing subject, in the constant process of embracing, rejecting, and negotiating.

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[50] *Arcades* [J57,3] 331.

If the modern experience is characterized by the experience of shock, represented by the motif of a woman passing by, the female spectator must investigate how she has internalized and carried this motif of shock (this objectification of herself as the embodiment of modernity) and how it has affected her subjective perception and voice. The poetics of the passante-flâneur, as a subject-object complex, requires an innovation of style that directly challenges Baudelaire's experience of shock as a short experience (by a self-possessed individual) of the separate shocking image-object. In Solvej Balle's collection of stories *Ifølge loven: Fire beretninger om mennesket* [*According to the Law: Four Accounts of Humankind*] we see Baudelaire's motif of the shocking image-object re-imagined as an integral part of both the subject position and the long experience; shock maintains its poetic function, only this time not in the form of the image, but as an overall *style and tone*: Jørgen Viesland observes that "the narrative function [in *According to the Law*] has been reduced to a bare minimum, leaving the space left over to an impersonal yet strangely intensified voice" ("Into the Heart of Darkness" 108).

Gitte Mose puts Balle's *According to the Law* in with a group of short-prose works that appeared in Denmark in the 90s, and were defined as *punktromaner* [pointlike novels]. Mose includes in her discussion of the *punktroman* the Norwegian poet Jan Erik Vold's definition: "'poesi er punkt, prosa er linje' (poetry is point, prose is line)" which draws our attention to the way in which such fiction is "characterized by both breaks and continuity": "its narrator and sequence of events imply process, development and/or remembrance in time" and yet the point is "arithmetically defined as the crossing of two lines without dimensions or possibility of division" ("*Flashes: Danish Short Fiction*" 41). This oxymoronic struggle between narrative and image, movement and fixity (and between language as sign and language as surface) is mirrored in the hesitant movement of the passante-flâneur. For example, in the second story in Balle's collection, "Tanja L.," Tanja L. is a traumatized image-object who, nevertheless, moves ahead in her quest, pushing at the limitations of her assigned identity.She is constantly finding and losing sight of her way, and her goal, as the analytic process of her quest gives way to poetic impressions. Similarly, the reader finds that story gives way to line, and line to tone, and tone to the surface of the text, or the word itself as image.

The Science of Flânerie

The time is approaching when it will be understood that a literature which refuses to proceed in brotherly concord with science and philosophy is a murderous and suicidal literature.

Charles Baudelaire qtd. in Benjamin[51]

We are scientific because we lack subtlety.

Roland Barthes[52]

Solvej Balle's *According to the Law* is a collection of four loosely interrelated short stories, each of which revolves around its central character's quest to resolve a (seemingly) scientific mystery, accented with a philosophical tone, and hint of neurosis: a biochemist in Quebec is obsessed, despite the ridicule of his scientific community, with finding a material in the human brain that is responsible for man's upright posture; a law student who makes men drop in writhing convulsions, but is unable to feel pain herself, travels around Europe in an empirical quest to understand the nature of pain; a Danish mathematician, intent on living a transcendental life approaching pure mathematics, attempts to live as close to the number zero as possible so as to avoid being counted, or accountable to anything; an artist on the streets of Quebec, who makes masks for the boulevardiers, feels more akin to the material she works with than to other people; her greatest effort as an artist/anti-artist is the transformation of herself into material form.

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[51] Charles Baudelaire qtd. in Benjamin "The Paris of the Second Empire," *The Writer* 74.

[52] Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* 61.

Each story is prefaced by a well known law (scientific, legal, or religious) that seems to be thematically linked to its corresponding story. The structure of each story is also lawful, following the classic rules of plot structure. The most significant allusion to lawfulness is found in the language and tone of the collection that resembles, as many critics have pointed out, the reductive form of scientific study or reportage.[53] Marianne Ping Huang describes the prose rhythm as “exact, succinct and uniform for long stretches, in places merely based on factual main clauses. It is a co-ordinating prose that notes and refrains from comment”[54]

However, while the book appears to work according to the Law—its tone, dramatic form, and linguistic elements re-enforcing its theme—it also undermines this proposed accordance, exposing the arbitrariness of the rules that govern our systems of knowledge. For example, while all the science used in the stories seems plausible, it is, in fact, invented; and, although the characters' quests all end in formal resolution, the meaning of the act of resolution remains opaque and mysterious, and so throws into question the reliability of both empirical scrutiny and a traditional structure.

This tension between lawfulness and something that exceeds or escapes the law points to the book’s major theme that Balle herself mentions in an interview:

> In the sciences it is a well-known phenomenon that occasionally you can not progress any further in research into a specific problem, and that you suddenly find yourself in a blind alley. And then the research becomes philosophical, and

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[53] See, for example, Thomas Fechner-Smarsly’s "Entropic Desires: Themes of Biological Decay in Scandinavian Art and Literature" in *Gender-Power-Text: Nordic Culture in the Twentieth Century,* ed. Helena Forsås-Scott (Norwich, UK: Norvik Press, 2004) 71; and Jørgen Viesland, Chapter 6 of *The Homeless Subject* (Gdansk: Gdansk University, 1998) 106.

[54] Marianne Ping Huang, “On According to the Law.”

> you have to go back and think again about certain fundamental structures. You have to re-examine some regular structures or create some new ones.[55]

This process of investigation—which ends in a "blind alley," requires a departure from Empiricism, and an interrogation of the foundations of knowledge—is a critique of science that can also be read as a critique of the scopophilia that has dominated the modern world's models of knowledge. I will argue that Balle uses the language of science in order to point to its own limitations, and also to the limitations of vision as a method with which to deduce truth. Marianne Ping Huang is right to identify this paradox in the tone of the writing: "[w]hile especially the optic through which all is viewed itself institutes an examination aimed especially at charting bodies in motion, a 'tone' makes itself heard throughout this overriding project by letting 'something' not forming part of any examination interact and dynamise the accounts" [sic]. In the following readings of the stories, I will explore the way the formal and tonal restraint of Balle's prose bring forth this 'something' that is in excess of the Laws of language and knowledge, and how it relates to the formation and processes of the female flâneur.

The even tone of the four stories in the collection is suggestive of the "masculine" or authorial voice attempting a controlled empirical study of its "feminized" object that resists being completely revealed. The dominance of the male gaze in art and literature that separates the seeing subject and its object is highlighted in Balle's stories by her parody of two other patriarchal models of perception that maintain this power imbalance: science, and clinical psychoanalysis.

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[55] Marianne Juhl, An interview with Solvej Balle, "Human Beings are Women as Well," *DanishLiterature.info* (interview was first brought in *Weekendavisen* 1 Oct. 1993) <http://www.danishliterature.info/2d9000c/Action/004/fid/29/aid/15/lang/eng>

In his overview of twentieth century visual theory, Daryl Ogden traces how both these "patriarchally conceived models of knowledge are communicated in pervasively visual terms that go far toward defining the metaphors of science as phallocentric" (7). He makes reference to Ludmila Jordanova's chronicling of the gender construction of science and medicine from the eighteenth century to the present, in which she argues that Enlightenment science "viewed nature as a personified woman, as a feminine object to be unveiled, unclothed, penetrated, and mastered by masculine science." With this process "science places special emphasis on seeing, both intellectually and sensibly, further accentuating the masculine construction of scientific vision over and against feminized nature" (7).

The conspicuous and authoritative style of Balle's stories suggests that each character performing his or her specific scientific empirical study or experiment is also under the close, clinical gaze of the narrator/behavioural psychologist. The connection to psychoanalytical discourse is accented by the fact that the characters are presented with first name and last initial in the way they are in Freudian case studies. Ogden notes Hélène Cixous' observation in "Sorties" regarding the scopophilic nature of psychoanalysis: the "strange importance accorded (by Freud and Lacan) to exteriority and to the specular" makes it a "voyeur's theory" (Cixous 95; Ogden 10). Like the gaze of the analyst, the gaze of the narrator is unreturnable. The reader and narrator's position, and thus vision, in relation to the text resembles the visual power imbalance Ogden sees between doctor and patient that is created in the Freudian consulting-room choreography: the arrangement of the furniture allows the patient to be seen by the doctor, but unable to return his gaze (Ogden 9-10).

In Balle's work, the arrogance and failure of the one-sided surveillance in these fields is exposed when we find that, although the smallest actions of characters are recounted, and their deepest, one-track desires lay bare, the symbolic meaning of their gestures and motivations remains inscrutable. The one-way gaze reveals nothing but actions and surfaces; there is always a sense that something exceeds the Law that is governed by visual examination. In particular, the women of Balle's stories refuse to be penetrated by the methodology of the male gaze of art, science, psychology, and by a purely empirical approach that Balle parodies in order to undermine.

The tone running throughout suggests not only scientific account, but also a state of shock: not the kind that produces a Baudelairean, sudden, brutal image, but a state that closely resembles George Simmel's description of the modern urban condition of desensitization that happens over time: what Simmel calls "the blasé attitude." This attitude is the result of "the rapidly changing and closely compressed contrasting stimulations of the nerves" that occurs with the overabundance of external stimuli in the city. Eventually, "[a]n incapacity [. . .] emerges to react to new sensations with the appropriate energy" ("The Metropolis and Mental Life" 51).

This mingling of "the blasé attitude" and the scientific account in Balle's stories corresponds to a phenomenon Simmel claims is a product of the modern urban psyche: in order to protect himself against "the threatening currents and discrepancies of his external environment" metropolitan man "reacts with his head instead of his heart": with "that organ which is least sensitive and quite remote from the depth of the personality" (48). Empirical, scientific study and the economy of the city are brought together so that: "[t]he calculative exactness of practical life which the money economy has brought about corresponds to the ideal of natural science: to transform the world into an arithmetic problem, to fix every part of the world by mathematical formulas" (50).

To identify the researcher characters of this collection as flâneurs it is helpful, first, to exemplify how their specific problems weave together the themes of scientific study and urban alienation.[56] It is a common theory in urban planning that the city man mimics his own evolutionary progress in the forms he builds as he moves from the natural world to the city: the verticality of the masculinized city stands in direct contrast the horizontality of the feminized landscape (Gilloch, 108). In the first story of Balle's collection, "Nicholas S.," we see how the biochemist's quest for the material that enables humans to stand upright is a symbolic investigation into man's civilization process: namely, the alienating effects this evolution has on the relationships between men and women, and between theoretical and processional practices.

We see the alienating failure of the scientific approach, as it is connected to phallocentrism, when the biochemist, upon locating the substance, feels strangely disquieted (rather than victorious). After his discovery, instead of taking the bus home, as per usual, he walks through the city in the middle of the night, trying to pinpoint this feeling: "Den kunne spores i kroppen som et svagt ubehag, men måtte sprogligt placers et sted i området 'fejltagelse, uopmærksomhed, forglemmelse, forseelse'" [it manifest[s] itself in his body as a vague unpleasantness, but linguistically speaking it would have to belong somewhere in the area designated 'error, negligence, forgetfullness, oversight'] (Balle 30; Haveland 24). Although he has not thought of "kvinden, der ventede ham i deres fælles lejlighed" [the woman waiting for him in the apartment they shared] once while working at the laboratory, he doesn't attribute his sense of oversight with this (Balle 29; Haveland 23). Nicholas imagines the woman who is "[s]om regel opholdt hun sig på steder i lejligheden, hvor mennesker sædvanligvis ikke holdt til" [usually (. . .) occupying some spot in the flat where people were not normally to be found] will argue, upon his return, that no molecule "gav mennesket grund til at skille sig ud fra dyrene, planterne og verdens andre genstande" [gave mankind reason to set itself apart from animals, plants and all the other things in the world] (Balle 33-34; Haveland 27-28).

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[56] Simmel's observation that the "functional specialization of man and his work" which defined the urban citizen as an autonomous subject is certainly invoked by Balle's highly specialized and obsessed characters. (47).

While the dead woman symbolizes nature feminized "unclothed, penetrated, and mastered by masculine science" (Jordanova referenced in Ogden 7), the living one, with her unruly arguments and occupation of space, suggests an evasive body, and potential knowledge in excess of scientific deduction. Therefore, the law that is the epitaph for this story: "[e]t legeme, der efter dødens indtræden påkalder sig tvivl om dets dødsårsag, skal ifølge loven gennemgå en obduktion" [(b)y law, any body which, after death has occurred, gives rise to suspicion, shall undergo an autopsy] read in the context of the story, suggests that, in the discourse of science, it is specifically the female body that gives rise to suspicion (Balle 6; Haveland 1).

The story ends with Nicholas S. arguing defensively into the dark "så havde mennesket rejst sig [. . .] vel vidende, at et langt særpræget molekyle holdt det oprejst, og at det kun i sine drømme hørte sammen med verdens andre væsener og ting" [man had raised himself up onto his hind legs (. . .) in full knowledge that he was being held upright by a long and idiosyncratic molecule, and that only in his dreams did he ever belong among the other creatures and things in the world] (Balle 37; Haveland 30).

However, his sense of autonomy and his belief in mankind's "full knowledge" have left him alienated from, and in conflict with, what we can read as the feminized and natural world that continues to be mysterious despite his applied method, research and theories.Awake in "full knowledge" Nicholas S. is still troubled by this excess that is suggestive of the unconscious, or suppressed, dream world: "[k]vinden ved siden af ham bevægede sig i mørket. Hun lyttede ikke. Hun sov." [[t]he woman beside him shifted in the darkness. She was not listening. She was asleep] (Balle 37; Haveland 30).

In the third story "René G.," we see the correlation between science and the city in how a mathematician's love of pure, over-applied, mathematics relates to his rejection of civic identity; this rejection comes close to the flâneur's own sense of being an outsider. Simmel explains how applied mathematics relates to civic life in the metropolis:

> Punctuality, calculability, exactness are forced upon life by the complexity and extension of metropolitan existence [. . .]. These traits must also color the contents of life and favor the exclusion of those irrational, instinctive, sovereign traits and impulses which aim at determining the mode of life from within, instead of receiving the general and precisely schematized form of life from without. (51)

René G avoids being a subject of the schematized form of life by making himself numerically untraceable. He spends none of a grant he has been awarded; instead he survives by roaming the street at dusk, in sunglasses, picking up the fruit and vegetables left in the market after closing time, and catching and roasting a pigeon when he needs to. He dodges the census people who repeatedly hound him by telling them that the number of people that live in his apartment is zero. In this way, René G. works toward "den mindst mulige handlen, det mindst mulige antal viljesakter" [the least possible amount of action, the least possible number of willful acts] and "[f]or hver dag tættere på at være ingen og inden længe måske så tæt på nulværdien" [(g)etting closer, every day, to being no one] (Balle 79-80; Haveland 67-68). This desire to be no one, and do nothing, is at the heart of Baudelaire's flânerie.

This goal of René G's story is related to the social content that Benjamin tells us was the original focus of the detective story: "the obliteration of the individual's traces in the big-city crowd" (*The Writer* 74). All of Balle's stories contain some elements of the detective story: a victim and scene of a crime. In discussing Edgar Allan Poe, Benjamin reminds us that the detective story belongs to a literature that brings together "the scientific story, the modern cosmogony, and the description of pathological phenomena" (74), three focuses that come together in *According to the Law*. The story of René G., like the one of Tanja L., is similar to Poe's story "The Man of the Crowd," where the narrator is in pursuit of an unknown man who always manages to disappear by remaining in the middle of the crowd. At the end of Poe's story the detective-flâneur, who has grown "wearied unto death" by the aimless pursuit, stops "fully in front of the wanderer, [and] gaz[es] at him steadfastly in the face." However, the Man of the Crowd does not stop, and continues in his endless wandering. The narrator says: this man "is the type and genius of deep crime. He refuses to be alone. He *is the man of the crowd*. It will be vain to follow; for I shall learn no more of him" (187-188). This moment troubles the narrator's superior sense of autonomy since he has been complicit in tracing, and thus mirroring, the man's movement; as Deborah Parsons points out in her discussion of Poe's story: a "gap is thus discovered between social identities attributed to people and their own sense of identity" (23).

Like Poe's narrator, René G. has convinced himself that he is the detached spectator, invisible to the other eyes in the objectifying crowd. He too has a moment of interaction with a stranger that compromises his autonomy. One day he discovers that an old man in the market he has seen often has also been watching him. René G. finds himself being arrested when this old man identifies him as a thief and vagrant: "[m]anden havde set ham fange en due flere måneder tidligere og havde siden holdt øje med ham" [(t)he man had seen him catch a pigeon some months earlier and had been keeping an eye on him ever since] (Balle 82; Haveland 69). Slowly a crowd gathers around the scene. René G.'s crime is put on record and he is linked to Interpol's missing persons file. Ironically, his plan to live as close to the number zero as possible has made him more a number in the system than if he had complied with the perfunctory forms of accountability.

Tanja L. and Alette V.: Female Flâneurs in a State of Shock

Balle's collection does maintain many of the elements of male literary flânerie that work to destabilize literary conventions: the theme of chance (the unexpected encounter) disrupts narrative flow; the randomness of the flâneur's experience contributes to the leveling of the hierarchy of images considered appropriate to art. The mundane acts and images that make up most of the narrative become intriguing, exciting almost, simply because of their inclusion: the spare, non-descriptive language insists on their importance, making them image and language events. All the stories in the collection revolve around asocial individuals who are not just obsessed with scientific study, but also the minutia of their urban streets. They go, as Benjamin famously said of the flâneur, "botanizing on the asphalt" (*The Writer* 68).

However, in the stories of female flânerie, "Tanja L." and "Alette V.," the investigative behaviour of the flâneur is driven not only by visual images, but also by obsessions connected to a sense of touch and materiality—something missing from the tradition of male flânerie: Tanja L. searches the streets of European cities for the physical feeling of pain, and Alette V. desires to be nothing but material—a direct inversion of the male flâneur's development towards becoming a point of vision. The flânerie of both characters, defined by multi-sensory inquiry, changes the meaning of a shock-driven poetics that is inherent to the literature of the flâneur.

As opposed to Baudelaire's sense of shock, which is linked to the sudden revelation of an external image, Balle's sense of shock is related to what is repressed but rooted in the body. Although the lone, wandering urban women are objects of surveillance (written up as case studies), they are also repressed subjects: their repressed subjectivity is evident in their absurd acts that contribute to their unfinalizability as characters. It is *as* the embodiment of the shocked (repressed) voice (that is suggestive of something *not seen*) rather than as the perceived object of shock (the sudden image), that I read Balle's characters as passante-flâneurs. Their subjectivity is found in the tone rather than in the images of the text; this challenges the hierarchy of senses as defined by male flânerie: the privileging of the eye. It also conflates the binary of the (male) subject and the (female) object.

Baudelaire is interested in the experience of the shocking female image that tears through the male subject, reconstitutes it, and then vanishes; Balle's stories are interested in the experience of shock that is neither deflected nor assimilated, *nor* affective in forcing the (male) subject to re-imagine itself within its hegemonic group. For the female flâneur, shock does not come from the radical image that, in a brief moment, breaks through the protective defense shield to reconstitute the conservative, autonomous subject; instead, it comes from the internalization of socially enforced laws that feel fundamentally foreign to, but are nevertheless carried by, the unlawful female subject. This self-estrangement is the constant state of being for the female flâneur.

In this way, shock moves from the isolated experience (*Erlebnis*) to the long experience (*Erfahrung*): what is invasive is also retained in what can be referred to clinically as a "psychic numbness." Unlike Simmel's "blasé attitude" which is a defense of the autonomous subject against external stimuli, psychic numbness is the result of a repeated, internalized, and sustained culturally traumatic experience.[57] This "psychic numbness" becomes a metaphor for a prose that retains the starkness of shock, and thus the spare stylistic effect of the poetic motif. The relentless tone of shock is, therefore, evidence of a poetic prose that is suggestive of a subject that is composed of the object and subject position at once: the previously mentioned "crisis of positionality" which is the condition of the female subject.

Entropy and the Ruin of Opposites

A number of critics have remarked on the theme of entropy in *According to the Law*, which can be related to this state of psychic numbness. Jørgen Veisland, in particular, discusses it in relation to the subject's internalization of the other. "Solvej Balle's short story about Alette V., from the collection *Ifølge loven* is [. . .] radical in its attempt to merge subject and object, as the body, in its dead state, turns into the ultimate sculpture. Metamorphosis and mutation, here, merge with their own opposite, total stasis" ("Into the Heart"105).

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[57] Trauma as defined by Freud as "any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective field." "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" in *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995) 607.

Although Veisland does not relate this state to a feminist project, Thomas Fechner-Smarsly does: noting that in Scandinavian writing of the 1990s it was "mainly female writers, all of the same generation, who made a connection between body and catastrophe" and used the biological meaning of entropy metaphorically to "subvert (male) fantasies of power and immortality through processes of disintegration on the level of textuality" ("Entropic Desires" 264). Each of Balle's stories, Fechner-Smarsly notes, is organized around the concept of the human body as a dead body, an object "through which the interrelationship between biological status and the human condition is problematized" (272). This paradoxical idea that the dead body is also the disruptive rebellious body is hinted at in the second law of thermodynamics that prefaces "Alette V.": "[l]egemer, der befinder sig i et lukket system, hvor der ikke tilføres energi, vil søge mod større og større uorden" [(b)odies held within a closed system into which no energy is introduced will tend towards greater and greater disorder] (Balle 90; Haveland 75). I will argue that in both "Alette V." and "Tanja L." the entropic female body within the "closed system" of masculine imaging becomes the disorderly body that disrupts the system that it is enclosed by. This entropic body acts as an opaque and mysterious Other that disrupts (disintegrates) longstanding ideological and literary conventions (realism and naturalism in particular) that assume it is possible to find a universality to, and transparency between, lived experience and the representation of that experience.

The entropic body figures in both Alette V.'s and Tanja L.'s versions of flânerie that involve an obsession with material existence over transcendent form: Tanja L. does not know what pain is, and desires to understand it. She is not interested in images and representations of pain. She wants to know pain itself; Alette V. works on the streets of major cities built on the European model fashioning portrait busts for the boulevardiers. She is disinterested in images she produces; she is obsessed with the material she uses and desires to be material herself. And so, she orchestrates her suicide to join the world of things—hers is the reversal of the Platonic ideal that everything is moving forward to a transcendence of matter.

Like the flâneur, Allette V. and Tanja L. find the conventions of art and history to be suspect. Alette V., when she was alive, insisted that "[k]unstner var hun ikke. Hun førte mennesker til tingenes verden" [(s)he was no artist. She conducted people to the world of things] (Balle 92; Haveland 78). She disdains any characterization of herself as a sorceress, or the suggestion that her work has to do with metaphysics, alchemy (the *symbolic* activity of turning base material into gold), or any kind of transformation other than a material one (Balle 101; Haveland 85-86). Alette V. is content with cheap materials, and it is only literal transformation that interests her: the way the weather has transformed the metal rooftops of Quebec; with a flâneur's eye she notices how "tagenes grønne kobber farvede lyset i byen" [the green copper rooftops coloured the light in the town] (Balle 91; Haveland 77). The transformation Alette V., herself, will undergo is not psychological or emotional but physical. Her decision to become material comes as a response to being commissioned by a rich, white-haired, client of "høje alder" [great age] who is meant, in part at least, to represent the history of Western patriarchal tradition (Balle 97; Haveland 83). Alette V. finds herself putting aside her usual malleable material for bronze to make this man's image; in this move she appears to be made somewhat culpable in what Craig Owens calls modernity's hysterical attempt to recover some sense of mastery by way of the resurrection of "monumental cast-bronze sculpture—[a]medium[. . .] identified with the cultural hegemony of Western Europe" (67). However, Alette V. appears to be somewhat mortified by her engagement with this tradition. Her aim has never been to attempt to immortalize herself or others through the hardness and durability of a material; and although her male model judges Alette V. as "gal, en vanskabning" [mad—a monstrosity] (Balle 98; Haveland 83), the bronze cast she has made of him unnerves him as it in some way exposes this tradition of power.

The power imbalance between wealthy and poor, outsider and citizen, female and male, is not lost on the reader; however, Alette V.'s antisocial goal and final act do not make her a victim of her gender. Rather, they parody the representation of the poor, public woman as an object of a masterful gaze, and suggest a defiant reaction against the bronze creation. By becoming an object in accordance with her own terms Alette V. escapes the old man's image of her that fixes her place in the social hierarchy: she feels she cannot go back to plaster after working in bronze; however, her work in bronze would force her into the market in a way the flâneur despises, and into an economic exchange that would destroy her. (Street clients would not be able to afford this work.)

Therefore, Alette V. uses her own body as her final great work, and in so doing meshes object and subject positions. She uses alcohol to open the pores of her skin to let in the cold Quebec air; she waits for her body temperature to drop, and then joins the world of inanimate things. When Alette V. becomes "en genstand mellem rummets andre genstande" [just one object among all the other objects in the room] (Balle 104; Haveland 88) we are reminded of the cool surface of a modernist painting; one thinks of Piet

Mondrian (who was both artist and mathematician) whose theory about art is similar to Alette V.'s: the modern impulse in a world sickened by its own images and symbols is to purge the world of metaphor and representation. Alette V. assesses the relationship of things in the room before she lies down to die. Her desire to reduce everything to simple relationships of colour and form is mimetic of Balle's modern style which is also minimal and concerned with surfaces: the "pictorialization of the word" (Jay 516).

Despite their emphasis on material existence, Alette V. and Tanja L., in their entropic states, dissuade the reader from a sociological reading of character. By troubling the distinction the natural sciences makes between living and non-living things, Balle also draws attention to how readers (mis)understand the distinction between characters in a text and living people. Hélène Cixous observes in her essay "The Character of 'Character'" that a character is only a name we give to a restricting set of ideological codes; when we say a character is life-like we are saying that it is supporting the dominant symbolic order of a culture (384). By refusing to be life-like, Alette V. and Tanja L. remind us that characters are not people and, while writing can be another world, it is not *the* world. What is thrown into relief with the entropic body is the surface of the text (with its entropic, or shocked, tone) that suggests the contract real women have been forced to forge with the Symbolic: "the order of discourse" (384). Once Alette V. is dead we are told that "[e]nhver ville vide, at brugte de ordet menneske om genstanden ved rummets ene væg, var det et udtryk for manglende præcision, en vane, en mangel på sproglig nøjagtighed" [(e)veryone would know that to use the word person of the object lying alongside one wall of the room would betoken a lack of precision, a habit, a want of linguistic exactitude] (Balle 104; Haveland 89). This "want of linguistic exactitude" is exactly the problem that faces the liminal characters of Alette V. and Tanja L.; Alette V. is regarded as "syg" or "gal"[ill, or mad] by the white-haired gentleman (Balle 98; Haveland 83)—for a lack of better words, and due to a lack of tradition that articulates female experiences and desires.

"Alette V." is the last story in the collection; ironically, although Alette V. chooses the mute world of death, it is her body that appears in the morgue in the first story "Nicholas S." This turns the collection into a continuous loop. Alette V.'s death becomes a continuous life in language. We cannot mistake her for human. Rather, as an object of the imagination this liminal figure of a language-in-shock, or crisis, becomes a site for the possibility of an endless refraction of the subject.

Tanja L.: Passante-Flâneur

To apply this argument of a shock-based poetics to how the passante becomes the female flâneur, we need to look to the story "Tanja L.". Of all the stories in the collection it best exemplifies the intersection of biological entropy, cultural shock, and psychic numbness (that brings together the subject and object positions).

The opening of "Tanja L.," when read next to Baudelaire's poem about the passante, produces the returned perspective that Janet Wolff calls for; however, it also takes into account the poetic function of the passante as a contained, image-object of masculine poetics. From a subject position (the perspective is that of the passante looking at the shaking "flâneur" on a train platform) the woman disappearing from the man's sight is a parody of the male object of desire. She views the man's pain; however, understood as his already determined love *object*, she cannot feel pain herself—she is, at once, the embodiment of the deadened, or static, image/object and the textual subjective point of view:

> Hvad Tanja L. kendte til den mandlige anatomi, kærlighedens væsen og lovene for lovene for legemers bevægelse i rum, skyldtes den mand, der netop havde trukket sig ind i skyggen fra stationsbygningen på Basels centrale banegård.
>
> Fra kupeen i et holdende tog så Tanja L., hvordan han blinkede mod det skarpe sollys og trådte et skridt tilbage. Øjeblikket efter, da toget klokken 10.51 satte sig i bevægelse, løftede han sin ene arm som indledning til en vinken. Før Tanja L. havde løftet sin arm til en lignende gestus, så hun en uventet bevægelse bryde igennem den velkendte krop på perronen. Et stød gik igennem skulderen på den løftede arm, standsede den begyndende vinken og fastfrøs kroppens stilling i det øjeblik, det tog for bevægelsen at skifte retning. Straks efter forplantede den ukendte bevægelse sig til hele skikkelsen, fra ansigtet til ankelledet, indtil hele legemet stod ramt af denne rystelse, der vred det ud af form, trak det skråt nedad og efterlod det forvredent på perronen.
>
> I det sidste glimt Tanja L. fik at se af dette menneske, før togets drejning skulte perronen og hans legeme for hende, opfangede hun skikkelsen, ramt af en lammende asymmetri, ukendt for Tanja L. (Balle 41)

> What Tanja L. knew of male anatomy, the nature of love, and the laws governing the movement of bodies through space, she owed to the man who had just pulled back into the shadows of the Basle central station building.
>
> From a compartment in a stationary train, Tanja L. saw how he squinted in the bright sunlight and took a step backwards. A moment later, at 10.51 a.m.

> when the train began to move, he raised his arm in the beginnings of a wave. Before Tanja L. could raise her arm in a similar gesture, she saw an unexpected movement escape from the familiar figure on the platform. A jolt ran down the shoulder of the lifted arm, halted the incipient wave and froze the body in that pose for the moment it took the movement to change direction. The next instant, the unfamiliar movement was spreading throughout the figure—from brow to foot—until the whole body was stricken by this tremor, which twisted it out of shape, dragged it sideways and left it, writhing, on the platform.
>
> In the last glimpse Tanja L. had of this man, before the curve of the train hid the platform and his body from her, she caught the sight of his figure, struck by a paralyzing asymmetry unknown to Tanja L. (Haveland 33).

This scene that opens the story presents the reverse perspective of the Baudelairean moment between passante and flâneur: instead of the passante, we see the body of the flâneur reconfigured by pain and loss. The gesture of a body, frozen in painful ecstasy before ruin, is the central, recurring motif in the story. It is the harsh image turned back onto the poet. Where Baudelaire used images of shock to launch an attack on received forms of allegory: "fixed and habitualized frames of perception,"[58] Tanja L. looks back at the "poet" and questions the validity of allegory itself (its reliance on ocularcentrism). Central to Tanja L.'s flânerie is a suspicion of the verisimilitude between speculative pain and a bodily understanding of pain. She is incredulous to all images of pain: the pain in all the books, theatre and film she investigates (Balle 55; Haveland 46). She is most disappointed by "kvæstelsen i højt forarbejdede versioner"

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[58] Christopher Prendergast, *Paris and the Nineteenth Century*, Ch 6 "Noisy and Hysterical Scenes" (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991) 145.

[the heavily contrived forms of wounding] she finds in Paris (Balle 56; Haveland 46). Her search to locate pain through a personal understanding of it is, arguably, a search for subjectivity; if it is a common assumption that we place pain "in the perceiver and not in the environment" because "[p]ain is not a disturbance in objects perceived but in the perceiving organism's way of living" then the fact that Tanja L. can't feel pain suggests she is an object, in search of subjectivity (390).[59]

However, this quest is a lengthy process of simultaneously utilizing, finding fault with, and modifying methods of analysis available to Tanja L.. We are told that it is this fallen man in pain that has taught Tanja L. everything she knows about love and movement through space (the male flâneur's paradigm). He is representative of the enormous building blocks in the development of Western thought (literary, philosophical and scientific) which are, typically, embedded in Balle's simple style of the account. Therefore, ironically, in order to understand pain, Tanja L. adopts the ocular methodologies of the masters that rely on a "metaphysics of presence": form that is presented, visible and conceivable.[60]

We are told, for example, that Tanja L. "havde én søgen. Hun bevægede sig i én retning [had but one goal. She was moving in just one direction] (Balle 45; Haveland 37). Towards her personal understanding of the nature of pain she adopts an Aristotelian teleology which is described in the story as "verdensbillede, ifølge hvilket enhver ting under månen bevæger sig i den retning, der er indlagt i dens natur og fortsætter denne bevægelse til den har fundet sin endelige plads" [a world-view, according to which everything under the Moon moves in the direction which is inherent to its nature, and continues in this course until it reaches its ultimate resting place] (Balle 44; Haveland 36). Tanja L.'s approach is meant to counter that of Copernican travellers who have "måtte affinde sig med den konstante bevægelse og opgav at søge efter ankomster" [come to terms with [. . .] perpetual movement and [given] up searching for points of arrival] (Balle 44; Haveland 36).

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[59] Truls Wyller, "The Place of Pain in Life," *Philosophy* 80 (2005) 385-393.

[60] For a lengthy discussion on how Western Philosophy, starting with Plato's and Aristotle's masculinized sense of form, is complicit with what Derrida calls a "metaphysics of presence" see Martin Jay's Ch. 9, " 'Phallogocularcentrism': Derrida and Irigaray" in *Downcast Eyes*. 493-542.

The Aristotelian view of history that moves towards closure, or a final resting place, is mimicked in the form of the story which borrows from the genre of the "analytic detective story," the aim of which is "the deductive solution of a mystery" (Irwin 941).[61] John T. Irwin quotes a review of Edgar Allen Poe from an 1856 Journal in which this genre of writing is described as the writing that bears the "signs of the literature of the twentieth century—love giving place to deductions . . . the interest of the story moved from the heart to the head . . . from the drama to the solution'"(942).[62] "Tanja L.," like the other stories in the collection, displays many elements of the analytic detective story: it shows a lack of character development due to its focus on deduction and solution (Irwin 942); it brings the detective and criminal together in a close symbolic relationship that is indicative of modern paranoia. Benjamin tells us: "[i]n times of terror, when everyone is something of a conspirator, everybody will be in the position of having to play detective" (*The Writer* 72). Tanja L. makes the symbolic relationship literal in that she is both detective and criminal (another gesture towards the entanglement of the subject and object positions). Perhaps the most obvious nod to the analytic detective story is *According to the Law*'s obsession with the recording, or measurement, of time. Often we are told the precise hour and minute that incidents occur; however, the incidents recorded, unlike those in a detective story, seem innocuous and are not retrospective. Instead, the reader is kept in a continuous and mundane present: a state of flânerie which undermines the scientific, or technological, intervention of time upon the flow of "natural" events that belongs to the detective story proper.

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[61] John T. Irwin, "Detective Fiction as High Art: Lacan, Derrida, and Johnson on 'The Purloined Letter'" in *The Selected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe: A Norton Critical Edition*, ed. G.R. Thompson (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Ltd., 2004) 941-952. Irwin uses the term "analytic detective fiction" to distinguish the genre created by Poe from the stories driven by the detective's sense of adventure over analysis, that of Raymond Chandler, for example.

[62] Irwin quotes the Goncourt brothers' review in Edgar Allen Poe, *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, 3 vols., ed. Thomas Ollive Mabbott (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1969-78), 2:521n.

Despite Tanja L.'s best intentions to adopt the methodologies of philosophy and science, deduction itself is undermined by an absurd, presumptuous logic: "[e]thvert europæisk menneske af Tanja L.s generation ved, at Ondskaben bor i Torino, Viljen i Basel, Tomheden i Paris, Tilfældigheden i København og Smerten i Barcelona. Tanja L. indtegnede disse byer på sit netop skitserede kort og drog den eneste mulige slutning ud fra de givne præmisser [. . .] for at begive sig mod syd, mod Barcelona og i retning at den smerte, hun ikke kendte, men hvis utilslørede udtryk hun havde set i et andet menneskes krop" [(e)very European of Tanja L.'s generation knows that Evil resides in Turin, Will in Basle, Emptiness in Paris, Chance in Copenhagen and Pain in Barcelona. Tanja L. marked these cities on her newly-draughted map and drew the only conclusion possible from the given premises (. . .) to head south, towards Barcelona, in the direction of that pain of which she had no experience, but whose naked manifestation she had witnessed in another person's body] (Balle 43-44; Haveland 35). Her applied theory begins to fall apart almost immediately when she succumbs to the crowd that functions much like Baudelaire's does—as an energy field that discombobulates and prompts new routes and discoveries: " [p]å Barcelonas morgentomme banegård betragtede hun de copernicanske rejsende, der drev forbi hende ud i byens gader eller i retning af de nyligt åbnede cafeer […]. Tanja L., der havde et mål, men ikke længere nogen retning at følge, stod rådvild i banegårdens forhal" [(i)n the early-morning emptiness of Barcelona railway station she watched the Copernican travellers, streaming past her onto the streets of the city or towards those cafés which had just opened their doors (. . .) Tanja L., who had a goal, but no longer a direction to take, stood in the station entrance hall, not knowing which way to turn" (Balle 45; Haveland 37).

This moment of bafflement is a significant turning point in her ontological development. It is at this moment that Tanja L. is, much like Alette V. is in her own moment, presented in a heightened visual, tableaux-like scene where she is pure object and pure evasive subject at once. The moment Tanja L. shifts from passante to female flâneur is the moment she dislodges herself from the masculine flâneur's gaze that is obsessed with the listing of mundane objects it encounters in the street: "[f]or ikke at stå i vejen for en mand, der fejede gulvet rent for cigaretskod, plasticposer, tændstikker, servietter og stykker af uspist brød, gik hun ud på gaden" [(t)o save being in the way of a man who was sweeping up cigarette butts, plastic bags, matches, napkins and uneaten crusts of bread from the station floor, she walked out onto the street]. Here is where the story begins to emphasize practice and chance over plan: "hvor hun i mangel på retning vandrede efter det første, der bevægede sig, en herreløs hund" [lacking direction, she then strolled after the first thing that moved—a stray dog] (Balle 45-46; Haveland 37). With the themes of chance encounter and the act of following, her search begins to resemble, more and more, the fantastic adventure of Poe's "The Man of the Crowd" in which the moment to moment mystery becomes more interesting than its solution.

Mystery, Borges tells us "'has something of the supernatural about it, and even of the divine; its solution, however, is always tainted by sleight of hand'" (qtd. in Irwin, 942). Tanja L.'s scientific method is, again, undermined when supernatural signs become integral to Tanja L.'s empirical practice. Her route is determined by encounters with various figures that carry the signs of visible pain in their bodies: she finds, follows, and drops them as their paths intersect; and as they show greater or less promise of providing an answer. However, the criteria for her experiment is, ultimately, unempirical: she begins to recognize that a recurring, supernatural tingling followed by a dull pressure in her shoulder signal the imminent collapse of the nearby body in pain. There is the subtle suggestion that this irrational pain is linked to the sin women have shouldered as objects of masculine desire: Tanja L. "vidste, at hun havde været skyld i den bevægelse, hun havde set på perronen, men hun var ikke længere sikker på, at det hun så ihærdigt havde søgt, var smerten"[63] [knew that she bore the guilt for the movement she had seen on the platform, but she was no longer sure whether what she had been seeking was, in fact, pain](Balle 66; Haveland 55).

This projected guilt becomes more and more suspicious to Tanja L. the more she traces the history of the "crime." As was previously mentioned, at the heart of her doubt is a mistrust of the representation of pain, particularly remembered pain. Tanja L. approaches a soldier in the hope that she can know pain by the pain she registers in his shoulder; however, the soldier tells her there has been no pain since Auschwitz: "[o]rdet var for længst gået i eksil i de medicinske videnskaber, hvor det endnu kunne bruges med mening. Al anden smerte hørte historien til" [(t)he word had long since gone into exile in the medical sciences, where it could still mean something. All other pain was history now] (Balle 54; Haveland 44). Pain that is not located in the body is seen as meaninglessness; cultural trauma is made abstract by time and distance. Tanja L's search carries her along the routes of the flâneur: "gennem smalle gader til mørke sale" [down narrow streets, into dark halls] where she finds cinema screens that show her human bodies "ituskårne eller i brand, opløste eller perforerede" [dismembered or burned, shattered or riddled with holes]; however, the screen shows her only a mise-en-scène of pain: "kroppe mod kroppe, genstande mod kroppe, kroppe mod genstande, genstande mod genstande" [body against body, object against body, body against object, object against object] (Balle 56; Haveland 46).

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[63] The noun *smerte* has both physical and emotional connotations; Balle seems to deliberately choose to leave the sense of pain ambiguous.

Tanja L.'s rejection of the images of pain is related to her rejection of Man's invention of the woman-image as the source of Mankind's downfall, and particularly how sin is related to spectacle of the female form: when Tanja L. goes to see the play of Oedipus and sees the young king limp across the stage, she registers "et sæt i skulderen, den velkendte erindring" [the (twitch) of the shoulder, the old memory] of pain (Balle 57; Haveland 47). Oedipus lamenting "den sorg, han havde forvoldt, gennemborede sine øjne med nålen fra moderens broche, og blodet flød ned ad hans ansigt" [the sorrow he had caused, pierced his eyes with the pin of his mother's brooch, and the blood poured down his face]—this causes Tanja L. to laugh (Balle 57; Haveland 47). Her quest is not "at høre [mandens] beretning om en kærlighedshistorie, en familietragedie eller en anden smertefuld erindring. Hun ønskede at kende smerten selv" [to hear [the man's] story of some love affair, some family tragedy or other, painful memory. She wanted to experience pain itself] (Balle 49; Haveland 40). This call for a material alternative to the images of pain directly counters Baudelaire's faith in the redemptive quality of the allegorical image. This redemption is suggested in the poem "Les Petites Vieilles" ['The Little Old Women']. The poet follows a poor, possibly ill, little old lady down a dirty Parisian street. The scene is transformed by the poet's vision of the street: "[o]ù tout, même l'horreur, tourne aux enchantements" [(w]here all things, even horror, turn to grace] (*Flowers* 88;89).

Therefore, Tanja L.'s following is a negative of Baudelaire's: while Baudelaire's masterful poet enters any body he pleases, to transform it with his allegorical vision, Tanja L.'s following involves the body succumbing to all the senses as it incorporates the Other into the self: "Tanja L. satte farten op og fulgte efter hende ind mod byen [. . .]. Efter få meters forfølgelse mærkede hun skoenes tryk mod tæerne, ryggens lige linje og følelsen af taskens rem over skulderen, som om enhver af kvindens sansninger og bevægelser passerede videre til hendes egen krop" [Tanja L. quickened her pace and followed the woman towards the city centre (. . .). After following her for some metres she could sense the pressure of the shoes against her toes, the straight line of the back and the feel of the bag's strap across her shoulder—as if every one of the woman's sensations, her every move, were being transmitted to Tanja L.'s own body] (Balle 46; Haveland 37-38). This is not to say that the flâneur's penchant for collecting the daily visual details of ordinary life is not evident in "Tanja L."[64] The story, although it is a study of the movement of bodies through space, is also a compilation of mundane images that suggest the flâneur's interest in the eternal sameness of his or her familiar city. (This is heightened by recurring references to the cycle of seasons). However, these images are always coupled with other acute sensory experiences:

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[64] Benjamin says in "The Return of the *Flâneur*" that Paris "it was said years ago,

> Sommeren igennem betragtede Tanja L. fontænerne, den faldende regn, mennesker der kastede cigaretskod, plasticposer, tændstikker, servietter og stykker af uspist brød på gaderne eller i floden. I efteråret søgte hun igen mod parkerne, mod træernes faldende blade og kastanjerne, der med dumpe lyde ramte gruset. Med stor opmærksomhed opsugede hun hvert enkelt fald, dets bevægelse og lyd i sin bevidsthed for igen at svække erindringens billeder (Balle 60).
>
> All summer long, Tanja L. looked at fountains, the falling rain, people throwing cigarette butts, plastic bags, matches, napkins and bits of uneaten bread onto the streets or into the river. In the autumn she headed back towards the parks, back to the leaves falling from the trees, and the chestnuts hitting the gravel with a dull thud. She paid close attention to every single fall, imprinting its movement and its sound on her mind, in an effort to dispel the images in her memory once more. (Haveland 49-50)

The image Tanja L. most wants to dispel is the one of the falling man that opens the story and sets it in motion: the one that implicates her in the cause of Man's pain. Here, sound is utilized to replace sight. At other times sight is accompanied by taste or touch: as with Alette V. who, whenever she arrived in a town "vandrede [. . .] igennem

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'is the narrow latticework balcony in front of a thousand windows; the red, tin cigar in front of a thousand *tabacs*; the zinc counter in the little bar; the concierge's cat.' In much the same way, the *flâneur* memorizes lists like a child" 266.

gaderne, rørte ved en mur, mærkede [. . .] hvordan hendes krop hurtigt vænnede sig til brostenenes hældning, aflæste gadernes længde, sidegadernes beliggenhed" [took a walk through its streets, touched a wall; noted (. . .) how quickly her body adapted to the tilt of the paving stones; registered the length of the streets, the layout of the side streets" (Balle 94; Haveland 79), Tanja L. is always highly sensitive to her environment: she hangs out in bars all day "bestil[ler] grønne oliven, spis[er] dem stående" [order(s) green olives, (eats) them standing up] and observes the patrons coming and going. She "fornemme[r] deres kroppes tilstand, deres synkebevægelser, måltidernes smag og konsistens" [sense(s) the state of their bodies, the way they swallow(. . .), the taste and consistency of their meals] (Balle 48; Haveland 39). We see then that while "[i]n the flâneur, the joy of watching prevails over all" and the result is "the amateur detective" (*The Writer* 98), in Tanja L.'s flânerie equal attention is paid to the other senses; at one point we even see her sniffing at the air for a whiff of a pain.

Near the end of the story, Tanja L. finally dispels her own sense of culpability in an act of flânerie that transforms the "isolated experience" into the "long experience" (Benjamin). As often happens in crime stories, the "villain," (in this case Tanja L.), returns to the scene of the crime to relieve her guilt: this is an act that is not possible for Baudelaire's passante. Tanja L. returns to a café she has just left in a hurry (in order to avoid ruining a waiter). Her logic is that "[h]vis hendes blotte tilstedeværelse sammen med et ukendt sæt af betingelser iværksatte et fald, måtte hun have afværget det ved at fjerne sig, og tjeneren på cafeen under træerne ville nu upåvirket placere kopper og glas på bordene, stable dem sammen på sin bakke, tabe en serviet i gruset og samle den op" [(i)f her mere presence, in conjunction with an unknown set of circumstances, could trigger off a fall, then by taking herself off she must have averted this one, and the waiter in the café under the trees would now be free to set cups and glasses on tables, pile them up on his tray, drop a napkin on the gravel and pick it up] (Balle 62-63; Haveland 52).

Because this story clearly challenges art's ability to represent life, and also art's allegorical function, what Tanja L.'s return (as an allegorical figure) suggests is a kind of helplessness of art: an inability for it to transform pain or influence the course of history. When Tanja L. returns, she finds the waiter on the ground, an ambulance approaching—an image that relinquishes her of her influence as passante, and, for our purposes, debunks a poetics that relies on the primacy of allegorical perception: "i sin lange søgen efter smerten havde hun ikke lært andet end at genkende en bevægelse, der ikke førte hende til smerten men kun til menneskelige fald, som hun hverken kunne frembringe eller afværge, og som hun kun ved en misforståelse havde troet angik hende" [(i)n her long search for pain she had learned nothing except how to recognize a movement which did not lead her to pain but merely to mortal downfall—which she could neither induce nor prevent, and which she had been misguided enough to think had something to do with her] (Balle 63; Haveland 52). The mundane pain of living is what we see when Tanja L. returns: it happens anyway, has nothing to do with the exquisite pain of Tanja L.'s passing influence. Of course, by replacing the isolated experience with the long Tanja L. is still involved in a metaphysics of presence: she had to return to the crime scene in an attempt to come to some truth about the matter, an assessment that depends upon a visual image of a mutilated human form which she associates with mortal downfall.

Tanja L.'s return undermines the short experience of the shocking image which, as we have just seen, undermines the exquisiteness of the image of pain posited by

Baudelaire: his allegory, his ability to turn any horror to grace. This happens again when Tanja L. believes she is being pursued by the man she left “i en position, der knapt var menneskelig. En krop trukket ud af form, et beskadiget legeme på perronen” [in a position that was scarcely human. A figure pulled out of shape, an injured body on a platform] (Balle 64; Haveland 54). At first, the sight of him seems to suggest that some redemptive return to origin (the unbroken body) through visual means is possible: ‘Ikke alene var hun uskyldig i de tilfældige fald på gader, i parker og på perroner, men heller ikke det menneske, der nu fulgte hende [. . .]. Det legeme, hun havde efterladt på perronen, havde inden længe rettet sig op og var gået videre. Hendes søgen havde været en misforståelse” [(n)ot only was she innocent of those coincidental falls in streets, in parks or on platforms, but she had not even inflicted permanent injury on the person now following her (. . .). The body she had left writhing on the platform had soon pulled itself together and gone on its way. Her quest had been a misunderstanding]. Since the fleeting female image (the passante) has been held responsible for the ruin of masculine composure, the imminent image of this autonomous and composed figure seems to free Tanja L. from her bound duty as passante, and allows her into the world of female flânerie: “[o]pstemt ved at mærke dette *hele menneskes tilstedeværelse* gik hun langsomt videre. Hun ville holde følelsen fast. Hun ønskede ikke andet end at vandre således gennem gaderne, lettet over menneskets hårdførhed” [Cheered by the sense of this *whole person’s presence*, she walked on slowly. She wanted to hold onto this feeling. She wanted nothing more than to walk like this through the streets, relieved at the thought of man’s resilience] (Balle 65; Haveland 54). [Emphasis mine]

Tanja L.'s pleasure is short lived: the man she has mistaken for her lover is in fact a violent stranger. Redemption and freedom from the patriarchal structures of knowledge that have co-opted her, through those systems' means (visual primacy and remembered origins) has proven to be a failure. It is telling that flâneur-lover, who is associated with the creative poet, becomes, in the experience of the female flâneur, conflated with an attacker who is a potential rapist or murderer. The parallel between lover and attacker is emphasized by the fact that after the man twists Tanja L.'s arm back and presses her against some bars he lets go of her arm and "foresl[år] venligt, at de [drikker] et glas på en café i nærheden [pleasantly suggest(s) that they might have a drink in some nearby café] (Balle 66; Haveland 55). This introduces an element into the dialectical struggle between flâneur and his passante that seems painfully obvious but is never directly addressed in male flânerie: while the flâneur imagines himself as a lover, and perceives the passante (often associated with the prostitute) to be a threatening force, he never perceives his *own* presence to be a threat to the passante—which is a much more likely scenario.

Tanja L. remains a figure of extended shock; she does not come out of her "psychic numbness;" she is not able to find a fixed location for pain, or come into full understanding what it is. Her adopted methods fail her. However, she does discover the impossibility of finding a transparency between image and essence, and to doubt "ocular immediacy", and "visual primacy" (Jay 501):

> Hvad vidste hun overhovedet? Hun vidste ikke længere, hvad hun søgte [. . .].
>
> Hun så på sin forfølger med et vist ubehag. Han havde ret. Et menneske, der ikke længere var sikker på sit mål, kunne gøre som han foreslog. Hun kunne

> indtage alkohol, hun kunne spille skak, eller hun kunne genoptage en bestandig vandring på må og få gennem gaderne. (Balle 66)

> What, if anything did she know? She no longer had any idea what it was she sought [. . .].
>
> She regarded her pursuer with a touch of unease. He was right. Anyone who was no longer sure of their goal, could do as he suggested. She could imbibe alcohol, she could play chess, or she could resume this perpetual, aimless ramble through the streets. (Haveland 55)

Tanja L. chooses to assault her opponent with a game of chess, an activity that can be seen as the antithesis to flânerie: "the aimless ramble through the streets," in that it involves foresight and circumspection. She believes she has found "den rette bevægelse" [the right kind of movement] (Balle 66; Haveland 55) in that it explains, for her, the moment on the platform, which she now sees was "[i]kke en krop, der blev kvæstet for altid, men et menneskes reaktion på et uventet træk" [(n)ot a body being wounded for all time, but one human being's reaction to an unexpected move] (Balle 67; Haveland 55). This "unexpected move" and "one human being's reaction to it" can be read as the dynamic between flâneur and passante that brings forth the harsh image at the heart of Baudelaire's allegory. This image at the beginning of the story is replayed by Tanja L. at the end, from a position of ocular authority (the game of chess); thus, the craft and plan of the poet is underscored: the effect of the-moment-of-shock in the poem is framed by a system of knowledge, and so the impurity of perception exposed.

Tanja L.'s last action seems to be a symbolic trade of the sensible for the conceptual: " Da hun modvilligt trådte ud på gaden, havde hun i sin taske et sammenfoldet skakbræt og 32 hvide og sorte skakbrikker" [(i)n her bag, when she reluctantly stepped out onto the street, lay a folded chessboard and 32 white and black chessmen] which she has traded for " en ost med hvid skorpe, et brød, nogle mønter og en brun pose med frugt" [a cheese with a white rind, a loaf of bread, some coins and a brown bag containing fruit] (items she acquired during her rambles through the market)(Balle 67; Haveland 56). However, although Tanja L. departs with her abstract tool in her bag (presumably to continue her attacks from a place of scopic authority), this last simple image on a table works on the reader's sensory knowledge, entangling visual desire with those desires of the material body: taste and touch. As well, the full meaning of Tanja L.'s gesture remains forever deferred and out of sight, posing a challenge to both the scientific eye and the poet's image.

If Tanja L's presumption starting out was to find a place for the signifier "pain" to rest, her continued wandering exposes the impossibility of this quest. The story, then, can be seen to problematize the practice of representation: in art, history, and language itself. The excessive restraint of form, I have argued, points to a repressed, sensual, excited voice that is not located anywhere in the text, but felt in the dynamism Ping Huang refers to.[65] I have given examples that suggest that this excess is approached with the practice of the female flâneur that comes up against, adopts, questions and subverts the systems of knowledge she has "inherited" and navigates through. Balle presents this tension between theory and practice symbolically with the dynamic of science, as a method and theory that attempts, but fails to bring to rest the flow of ever-coming-into-being. Martin Jay reminds us of how Jacques Derrida connects this deferral-of-rest to his own context of flânerie:

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[65] Marianne Ping Huang, "On According to the Law."

> [r]epresentations, Derrida argued, were 'sendings' (*envois*), which never reach their final destination or reunite with the object or idea they represent [. . .] Because of their inevitable "destinerrance," their interminable wanderings (like that of the Jews), representations can never be replaced by the pure presence of what they re-present. But neither can their difference from the "things" they represent be completely effaced in the name of a realm of pure simulacra entirely without a trace of reference. (508)

Tanja L., unfulfilled and reluctant, finds out that the sending of pain can never come back to her as its source object. However, in this space of deferral between the image and its source, the passante has a chance to become the female flâneur.

Chapter 3. The Crowd: Kirsten Thorup's Insistent "and"

I myself think it is much more interesting when [writing] seems ugly, because in it you see the element of fight.

Gertrude Stein[66]

The flâneur's relationship to the crowd has been a central theme in the literature of modernity. However, as Burton Pike points out in *The Image of the City in Modern Literature*, this relationship changed between the late eighteenth century and the early twentieth century. Sometime after Baudelaire was writing his urban poems, the bourgeois crowd, as the main threat to the integrity of the individual, was replaced by the more sharply negative, and abstract, concept of the masses. This change is suggestive of a gradual "technological conception of culture"; however, the "reduction of individuals to an abstract and mechanical function" can also, according to Pike, be traced to negative attitudes toward the French Revolution—from which came such concepts as the "workers of the world" and "The Revolt of the Masses" (110). Pike observes that in the crowd, or even the mob, a person can retain their individuality. The imagery of the conventional flâneur-poet is, in fact, dependent upon an empathetic figure—the prostitute, the little old lady, the ragpicker—emerging from the stream of the crowd. In Baudelaire's work, creative genius, though reserved for the individual in the crowd, is not found in the members of the bourgeois class. In fact, the poet of *Les Fleurs du Mal* who used paper and straw to plug the holes in his shoes, and refrained from making any sudden movements to avoid tearing his worn-out clothes, seemed to be the living embodiment of his own symbolic merger of the modern hero and the dispossessed person.

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[66] *How Writing is Written: Volume II of the Previously Uncollected Writings of Gertrude Stein,*ed Robert Bartlett Haas (Los Angeles: Black Sparrow Press, 1974) 151.

So how did the dispossessed hero become, in contemporary theory and writing, a model for the academic, or, in some other way, privileged writer?[67] We can, in part, attribute this to Baudelaire's own poetics. However, it can also be argued that Baudelaire's literary flânerie paved the way for socially and politically conscious writing practices that challenge the centre from the margin. Dianne Chisholm argues this in her book *Queer Constellations*: *Subcultural Space in the Wake of the City*. Baudelaire's allegory, as read by Benjamin,"destroys the facade of totality, homogeneity, universality, eternity: all faces of myth. Where myth symbolizes transcendence, allegory signals immanence, materiality, and destructibility—in short ruin" (84-85). It is out of this ruin that new literary subjects, forms, rhythms, can potentially arise. The flâneur walks through the ruins and along the margins of the ideal city, witnessing and retrieving what has not been accounted for by official history wherein the city is "cast as a monument to enlightenment" (85). It is because Baudelaire associates the socially marginalized figure with the avant-garde artist that the flâneur can become a potent vehicle for writing-in-the-feminine, for queer writing, and other writings that challenge the status quo. In general, the link between contemporary experimental poetics and marginalized subjectivity can be traced to Baudelaire's modern writing subject; he helped make it possible for the margin to become "'much more than a site of deprivation'; it is 'the site of radical possibility, a space of resistance.' Marginality can be seen as 'a central location for the production of a counter hegemonic discourse'"(237).[68]

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[67] This association is common. A good example is Peter McLaren's "The Ethnographer as Postmodern *Flâneur*: Critical Reflexivity and Pothybridity as Narrative Engagement," *Representation and the Text: Reframing the Narrative Voice,* ed. William G. Tierney and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997) 143-175. Here, the academic in the coffee shop longs for, and compares himself to, the revolutionary Che Guevara.

Nevertheless, while Chisholm is partially right in saying Benjamin's reading of Baudelaire's allegory "serves the revolution by acting as antimyth," in that it liberates revolutionary impulses from "phantasmagoria to complete the work of history and retrieve the city for the people" (85), the feminist reconfiguration of the flâneur I will outline in this chapter is, in part, a response to this use of allegory's failure to address the relationship between language and social change. Despite the fact that allegory allows for the filling-in of marginalized histories, Baudelaire's own use of allegory works to appropriate rather than articulate the histories of the disenfranchised, with a binary that separates the artist from his social subject. Walter Benjamin observes that Baudelaire was not concerned with the oppressed masses. Though he was drawn to the people in the crowd, Baudelaire was "nevertheless unable to rid himself of a sense of their essentially inhuman character [. . .]. He becomes deeply involved with them, only to relegate them to oblivion with a single glance of contempt" (Benjamin, *The Writer* 188). In a similar observation, Burton Pike comments that Baudelaire's poetry exhibits "the primacy of the individual poetic imagination, which first poeticizes the commercial industrial city and then withdraws from it" (113).

Most literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth century portrayed the isolation of the individual from the community negatively;[69] Benjamin notes that "[f]ear, revulsion, and horror were the emotions which the big-city crowd aroused in those who first observed it": Poe found it barbaric (*The Writer* 190); Valery observes that individual in the metropolis "'reverts to a state of savagery"'; the crowd was "the newest asylum of outlaws" (*The Writer* 190; 85). It is perhaps only because Baudelaire guards, with allegory, the threshold between the poet-flâneur and the masses that his representation of the crowd and its isolated individuals can figure positively and productively in his work. He does so to protect the privileged position of the artist. Baudelaire's allegorical genius, Benjamin points out, "drew its nourishment from melancholy." His transforming gaze bestowed "a conciliatory gleam over the growing destitution of men in the great city" (*Charles Baudelaire* 170). In Baudelaire, the masses "do not stand for classes or any sort of collective; rather, they are nothing but the amorphous crowd of passers-by." The general public becomes a "phantom crowd" made up of "the words, the fragments, the beginnings of lines, from which the poet, in the deserted streets, wrests poetic booty" (*The Writer* 180-181).[70] The crowd is an intoxicating word-mass out of which the image emerges.

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[68] Greta Gaard quoting Bell Hooks' "Marginality as Site of Resistance" in "Identity Politics as a Comparative Poetics" in *Borderwork: Feminist Engagements with Comparative Literature* (Ithica:Cornell UP, 1994) 230-243.

[69] Burton Pike's chapter "Individual and Mass" in *Image of the City in Modern Literature* offers a number of examples: Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*; T.S.

Baudelaire's allegory parallels capitalism in terms of the arbitrary value it affords objects; as Terry Eagleton points out, the allegorist-flâneur, like the consumer, "dip[s] randomly into the ruck of objects to single out for consecration certain ones that [he]

Eliot's *The Wasteland*; Franz Kafka's *The Trial*; Rainer Maria Rilke's *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge,* that deal with such themes as the terrorism of everyday life (105); sexual "boredom, exhaustion, and despair" (104); the inability of artists to find success due to a lack of community (101).

[70] In this thesis I use two English translations of both Benajamin's essays and Baudelaire's lyric poetry. My choices are based on the poetic sense of the translation and its persuasive impact. This corresponds to my overall discussion of the importance of poetic meaning (over communicative meaning), and to my discussion of translation-as-transformation, outlined in Chapter 4.

know[s] to be in themselves arbitrary and ephemeral."[71] Trailing behind the city's intra-exiles, the flâneur-poet, Baudelaire tells us, "enjoys the incomparable privilege of being able to be himself or some one else, as he chooses [. . .H]e enters as he likes into each man's personality. For him alone everything is vacant; and if certain places seem closed to him, it is only because in his eyes they are not worth visiting" ("Crowds," *Paris Spleen* 20). The poet's special perception makes visible only what he deems worthy of visibility, and hollows out those marginalized bodies, ridding them of whatever agency they might have.[72] At the same time, this process of invention by the privileged observer is not subjected to the scrutiny of the returned gaze of the crowd: his pleasure is "to see the world, to be at the very centre of the world, and yet to be unseen of the world." This observer "is a prince enjoying his incognito wherever he goes" (Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life" *Selected Writings* 400). This dynamic suggests that Baudelaire does not problematize his own stance on the margin, or the gaze of the artist[73] whose pure perception is compared to that of a child or convalescent; it "is acute and magical by its very ingenuousness" (402).

This allegorical appropriation of the dispossessed subject runs counter to the project of feminist flânerie I wish to discuss here. For Baudelaire there was no correlation between formal, linguistic innovation and social revolution: his abstraction of the crowd points to this. In female flânerie, the two are inseparable. I will present the practice of literary flânerie as a socio-political act that resembles writing-in-the-feminine in which, as the Canadian experimental prose writer and critic Gail Scott says, "the ethical function of the text [is] underscored in a writing practice greatly concerned with deciphering the effects of social constructs in language" (*Spaces Like Stairs* 10). This brings us back to the question: why has the trope of the flâneur evolved to include the very class of people it once rejected? Baudelaire's legacy of allegorical abstraction has contributed to the fact that, although the masses have since replaced the crowd as the flâneur's Other, recent literary and critical discourses that have brought back this binary have not attended to the notion of class struggle imbedded in the new formation. Pike observes that the term "the masses" signifies the dissolve, or the fear of the dissolve, of the well-constituted subject: "the disappearance of an individual will in the collective emotion of the mass can easily become a metaphor for the submergence of 'higher' civilized, rational thought into the 'base' instincts of the mass. This figure, then, reflects the prejudice and fear of the upper classes of society toward the lower ones" (110). However, as an aesthetic metaphor now so removed from its social context, this kind of flâneur loses its ability to radicalize language. Scott points out this hypocrisy in an interview:

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[71] Terry Eagleton qtd. in Peter McLaren's "The Ethnographer as Postmodern *Flâneur*" 147.

[72] In *A Map to the Door of No Return.* (Canada: Doubleday, 2001) 35-40, Dionne Brand discusses the symbolic entering of bodies as a form of regulation. She identifies the Black body as one of the most regulated bodies after the female body. By "playing around" in the body of another, she argues, we apply specific societal functions to it, "quite outside its own agency—functions which in fact deny and resist its agency." As with the female body in Baudelaire's time, with the Black body of our own time there is a "constant manipulation of its transgressive trope."

[73] Critics have argued that Baudelaire's motif of the shocking image does suggest a returned, critical gaze. See Chapter 2 for a counter argument to this.

> I still hear people talking about flânerie in Paris and it just strikes me as being completely ludicrous. A professor on sabbatical, or a person on their junior year abroad, or a writer, like myself, who gets a grant to a very comfortable studio,

> does not represent, unless she finds some very original way to live, the spirit of resistance and enforced marginality that the early flâneur aimed for. (Frost 4)[74]

She poses the important rhetorical question: "who are the real flâneurs today? In Paris they're the homeless people looking for cobblestones that aren't too bumpy to sleep on. Or the sans papiers, refugees. Those are the flâneurs today" (4).

Kirsten Thorup, in her novel *Baby*, presents a literary configuration of the social flâneur identified by Scott.[75] This is not unique to Thorup. The presence of the disenfranchised female flâneur in Modern Danish fiction can be traced to the combined presence of: second wave feminism; New Realism (including a strong presence of psychological realism) that was the predominant trend in prose in the 1970s; and the completion of Denmark's welfare state which raised some of the same concerns for Danes as a reconstructed Paris did for Parisians. George Haussmann's massive rebuilding of Paris as a dream city in the 1850s can be likened to Denmark's economic restructuring in the 1960s: the welfare state "fulfilled the boldest promises and raised the popular level of expectation to euphoria"; however, much like Haussmann's official city, the plan failed to meet the needs of everyone and, in fact, the desire for perfection created extremes of rich and poor, in its application:

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[74] Corey Frost. Interview with Gail Scott. "Some Other Kind of Subject, Less Bounded." *How 2* 1.4 (Sept. 2000): n. pag. Online. Available www.scc.rutgers.edu/however/v1_4_2000/current/ workbook/ index.html#interview

[75] Thorup has always been interested in figures that are outsiders or foreigners to a culture—both socially and psychologically. Her book of experimental prose poems *Love From Trieste* (1980) which has been read as an exploration of the fragmented thought processes of a schizophrenic, may also be read as a work of flânerie: the poems' settings are the busy streets and in cafes of Trieste; it is composed of fragmented perceptions of city space, and is replete with the habits and desires of the flâneur. Thorup has also written a number of television plays "about asocial, drifting, delinquent girls" and one "about foreign workers who have not yet mastered Danish" : *Du er smuk, jeg elsker dig* [You are Beautiful, I Love You] (Gray, *Danish Writers* 436).

> [w]hile the majority's standard of living continued to improve, a considerable minority was reduced to continuous unemployment. Another minority was still part of the rat race but tended to drop out easily. And last but not least, to sustain families' and society's progress, women entered the work force in large numbers. Still, with all these accommodations, the national debt continued to increase in a vicious spiral and a tendency to sidetrack the notions of solidarity and social utopia and to compete instead for the best conceivable niche in the marketplace became perceptible in the late 1970s. (Houe 513)

Forsås-Scott offers a slightly more positive view of the economic boom of the 1960s that had women "joining the workforce on an unprecedented scale," arguing that it contributed to the emergence of the women's movement and the shaping of feminist ideology ("Egalitarianism" 53). Either way, the relatively late industrialization of Denmark[76] seems to have contributed to class struggle (associated with industrialization) coinciding with the second-wave woman's movement. The result was that the women's literature of this time tended to be "explicitly anti-capitalist" (Forsås-Scott 54). These coinciding factors gave rise to a flâneur in Denmark's literature that was urban, poor, and female—one that resembles Gail Scott's conception of today's flâneur. This is the hero of Kirsten Thorup's fiction. Charlotte S. Gray observes that Thorup "focuses on the so-called invisible people in society, those who do not count, and who often happen to be women" (438). Forsås-Scott notes that Thorup's novel is a "far-reaching critique of patriarchy and capitalism" that focuses "on women in a variety of roles—the abandoned teenager, the wife, the single mother, the ex-mistress" (61-62).

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[76] Forsås-Scott notes that, in the nineteenth century, "[e]conomically, the Scandinavian countries lagged behind many other European nations, with agriculture [. . .] predominating" (39-40).

Despite the fact that, as Forsås-Scott observes, Thorup is one of a number of Scandinavian feminist writers that have, since the 1960s, complemented the longstanding interest in social realism with formal experimentation (61-62;60),[77] most critics and reviewers in English have privileged the social and psychological content of *Baby* over the book's form. This chapter will attempt to read the social content through the form. This connection points to language as a social construct that limits some subjects and privileges others. In this way, I will argue that *Baby* is not simply a dark study of the hopeless lives of a community in a poor district of Copenhagen, but an effort to undo patriarchal thinking through self-conscious shifts in language structures that may be read through Gail Scott's poetics of "ethical form."

We can locate this shift in emphasis from Baudelairean aesthetics to Feminist ethics when we look at how the crowd functions in Thorup's novel. The crowd is not a "phantom" out of which comes the isolated image that re-affirms the autonomy of the individual visionary. In *Baby*, the focus is not on the binary of the flâneur and his image that emerges from the crowd, but on the crowd itself. The structure of the book promotes a compassionate response to the working-class individual who, though she strives for autonomy (characters repeatedly express a desire to do things for themselves) is unable to stand out from the crowd.

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[77] "The textual experimentation that is also apparent in the writing of earlier periods is continued with a new boldness and sense of purpose. With the large-scale recovery of women's writing from the past combining with the impact of French feminist theory to illuminate, overwhelmingly, the marginalization of women and its effects, recent feminist writing in Scandinavia has been characterized by a range of innovative approaches, undermining and breaking down the established forms and suggesting a multiplicity of textual difference" (Forsås-Scott) 55.

Initially, the crowd scene produces Baudelairean figures—objectified and fragmented, in the phantasmagoric space of the spectacle: the market…or, in this case the nightclub. The first chapter "The Mexicana Club" functions as the scene for the crowd much in the way that Benjamin's arcade does: it presents a world in detailed miniature, and the city as a passage. In the anonymity of the nightclub the characters of the novel's world are presented in ways that evoke the illusory quality of the nineteenth century crowd: they are androgynous; their economic standing is not immediately apparent, or not what it appears to be; they drift together and apart; their thoughts and bodies are presented in fragments; their relations to each other seem arbitrary in that although they are dependent on, or fascinated with, each other their connections are shown to be fleeting and superficial; Timothy R. Tangherlini points out that "[i]n the same way that Thorup fragments the narrative into discontiguous segments, relationships between people within the narrative also appear arbitrary, disconnected, and coincidental. Throughout the book, the characters talk at and past each other, rather than with each other" ("Uncertain Centers" 320). In form, style, and character interaction, the novel is characterized by the overarching metaphor of the modern crowd scene.

This general crowd scene gives way, in the chapters that follow, to stories in which the characters are paired off, and the social and personal dynamics between them are developed. However, their individual stories of flânerie reveal that their lives are conditioned by a shared poverty and desperation that binds them to the crowd of the inner-city; the crowd becomes a metaphor for the determining, socio-economic limits that are internalized by the inner-city individual. Baudelaire's internalization of the crowd signifies an allegorical process. Thorup's signifies an ideological one.

The Baudelairean flâneur's relationship to the crowd involves choice that is related to the allegorical process of individual genius. Although Baudelaire's flâneur is powerfully drawn to the crowd, he still *chooses* to enter it; he can leave it when it is time to return to his room to write. Conversely, Thorup's flâneurs, although able to recognize the capitalist ideology that works to oppress them, are unable, practically, to escape it—as Nova, a teenage street kid and sometimes prostitute observes: "—Det et klart at den der har pengene bestemmer, sådan er systemet" ['It's obvious that the one who's got the money is the one who decides. That's how the system works'] (Thorup 97; Christensen 79).

Chance, losing oneself in the intoxicating multitude—from where we stand in Baudelaire's crowd, we see only a potentially endless flux of activity ("Crowds" 20). Thorup's crowd, on the other hand, makes us constantly aware of its borders—the economic and social limits are echoed in squalid and confining urban geography: there is a recurring motif of windows that can't be seen through or opened, for example.[78] Thorup's characters have vague pastoral dreams but can't break from their crowd and immediate urban environment that hold them together in a taut, co-dependent, though alienating, tension where nothing changes, where everything is made equivalent. For the most part, they circle Vesterbro, a poor district of Copenhagen, on foot. When they try to leave Copenhagen by car or train there are violent and punishing consequences, most of which take place in cars: in one case a crash, in another a murder.

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[78] See quoted passages below for examples of this.

That this crowd is defined by class struggle as opposed to imaginative possibility is evident in the figure that organizes both the crowd and the narrative: the slum landlord, loan shark, unofficial pimp and john Eddy. He is, as Jørgen Veisland points out, "the center around which the narrative and the other characters spin or 'eddy'." However, he is "a center and no center at the same time; he becomes a metaphor for a pervasive absence of meaning at the core of the social system" (Veisland 91). Eddy is symbolic of the phantasmagoric heart of capital to which every working person in the novel becomes indebted for the sake of their fantasies of freedom.

This exchange is most apparent in the relationship between Eddy and Mark—a car salesman who is no good at selling cars. Mark fetishizes the commodity while being subsumed by commodity culture. Although he is in deep financial debt to Eddy, Mark denies the reality of his economic situation, believing success is equal to the image of success: he buys expensive shirts and cologne he can't afford in order to sell cars. This dynamic, wherein the individual sacrifices himself to the commodity, is evident in an image that is the inverse of the Baudelairean image-in-the-crowd. Instead of a figure emerging from the market scene we find, in the moment Mark announces to his wife Cadett that he is being let go from his job at the car dealer's, these two figures engulfed in the flawless chrome of a car's fender (Thorup132; Christensen 111). All the characters are involved in some kind of economic exchange with Eddy so that the crowd, as community organized by Eddy, involves a false intimacy familiar to the market. Every personal exchange is mediated by a financial one; every character is obsessed by money even as they despise it.

Capital is related to, as it is in Baudelaire, civic lawfulness; Eddy, despite his shady high-interest loans and dealings with prostitution, is presented as (and imagines himself to be) a law-abiding citizen. He is the anti-flâneur. He lives in a nice suburban neighbourhood; unlike the other characters, he walks in the over-determined areas designated for walking: *Kongens Have* [The King's Garden]; he sits on a public bench to read about the stock market "beundre[r] den smukt anlagte park" [admir(ing) the beautifully landscaped park] (Thorup 111; Christensen 91). Eddy's space represents the Law of the Polis: the planned and controlled space of the city.

The action of the other characters always takes places in the marginalized areas of the city. The narrative exposes the poverty of Copenhagen through the flânerie of its female characters in particular. Cadett illustrates that the flâneurs of Thorup's literary landscape can be women, consumers, and rag-pickers (who are not transformed by the poet's vision of them):

> og hun gik hele vejen hjem og hun købte et franskbrød og en pakke rugbrød i en bagerforretning og hun talte sine tiører og femører og femogtyveører sammen. Der var lige nok så hun ikke skulle tage hul på en tier og hun lagde brødet i plastikposen og hun kom forbi en chokoladeforretning og en guldsmedeforretning og der lå en sammenkrøllet avis i rendestenen og hun så en smadret due på kørebanen og hun gik over gaden og hun tænkte på at skrive et brev og hun samlede en 25 øre op fra fortovet og idet hun rettede sig op, så hun et glimt at sig selv i en butiksrude og hun vendte hovedet væk og en bil med et blåt flag klistret på bagruden bremsede hårdt op og hun gik udenom en bananskal og hun samlede en tændstikæske op og den var tom og hun standsede foran et slagtervindue hvor

> der var billigt tilbud på medisterpølse og hun var lige ved at gå ind og købe noget og så gik hun videre og bagved hende gik 2 ældre kvinder og lidt efter gik de over på det modsatte fortov og Cadett så efter dem og det tog 3 kvarter inden hun var hjemme [. . .]. (Thorup 40-41)

> and she walked all the way home and she bought a loaf of white bread and a loaf of rye in a bakery and she counted her 10-*øre* and her 5-*øre* and her 25-*øre* and added them all together. There were just enough so that she did not have to break a 10-*kroner* bill and she put the bread in her plastic bag, and she passed a chocolate shop and a goldsmith shop and there was a wrinkled newspaper lying in the gutter and she saw a pigeon that had been run over on the street and she crossed the street and she thought about writing a letter and she picked up a 25-*øre* coin from the sidewalk and as she straightened up she caught a glimpse of herself in a store window and she turned her head away, and a car with a blue flag pasted to the back window braked suddenly and she walked around a banana peel and she picked up a matchbox and it was empty and she stopped in front of the window of a butcher shop that was advertising a sale on sausages and she almost went in to buy some but then she walked on and behind her walked two elderly women and a little later they crossed over to the opposite sidewalk and Cadett watched them and it took 45 minutes for her to get home [. . .]. (30-31)

Cadett always carries a brown plastic bag as a purse; it marks her as a rag-picker, as does her eye for refuse and her practice of selling the things she finds. The ragpicker is a recurring figure in Baudelaire's poems, one whose practice, Benjamin says, signifies the modern poet's method of finding the "refuse of society on [his] streets and deriv[ing his] heroic subject from this very refuse" (*The Writer* 108). He is referring to the way the flâneur-poet collects banal images as treasures. However, the above passage problematizes this analogy by highlighting a rift in the value placed on the writerly image and that of the street-item picked out by the rag-picker: the text "collects" mundane objects with no real-life use value, such as a squashed pigeon, a crumpled newspaper and a banana peel, while Cadett is only interested in spying refuse that has some sort of potential use value, no matter how small: a coin, a book of matches. We can see in this rift a likeness to Baudelaire's allegorical interest in separating the image from the object; however, the disharmony the text creates between poetic image and a depiction of a real life experience of the object turns Baudelairean allegory against itself. Thorup keeps in check the scavenger-like allegorical appropriation of the images of every-day poverty by underscoring her characters' focus on the use value of objects. We can see the text's self-conscious attack on the lyrical appropriation of the everyday image in a scene in which Nova, a young street kid, loiters around the Copenhagen train station:

> hun var alene og hun gik hele vejen til hovedbanen i brændende sol og asfalten flimrede og hendes hjerte bankede og hun kom ind i banegårdshallen og der var fuldt af mennesker [. . .] og hun begyndte at gå hen mod chokoladekiosken og hun fik øje på et pølsebrød i kioskens affaldskurv og hun tog det op og hun lagde det i sin taske og hun fandt et lille stykke chokolade som hang fast i noget blåt papir og hun trængte til noget sødt om morgenen og hun tog det i munden og hun blev stående og hun havde ondt i maven [. . .] og hun fik pludselig lyst til at onanere og hun blev helt varm og hun tænkte på at hun sommetider havde brugt en gul plastikrose som lå i et låg til en spraydåse eller en ølflaske eller en kuglepen og

> det var længe siden hun havde været i seng med nogen, hun følte ingen trang til det og efterhånden var hun osse blevet træt af at onanere, det blev for kedeligt [. . .]. (Thorup 91-92)

> Now she was alone, and she walked to the train station in blazing sunshine and the asphalt shimmered and her throat pounded and she came into the main part of the station and it was filled with people [. . .] and [she] started to walk over to a candy counter and she noticed a hotdog bun in the waste basket and took it out and put it in her purse and she found a small piece of chocolate sticking in some blue paper and she needed something sweet in the morning so she put it in her mouth, and she kept standing and her stomach ached [. . .] and she suddenly grew very warm and felt like masterbating and she thought of how she had sometimes used a yellow plastic rose that was part of the cover of a spray can or a beer bottle or a fountain pen and it was a long time since she had been to bed with someone; she did not feel any need for it, and after a while she had also gotten tired of masterbating because that got too boring [. . .]. (73-75)

That Nova uses everyday items, probably street refuse, to masterbate with de-glorifies Baudelaire's and Benjamin's poetic trope of the ragpicker; her sexual frustration and unalienable boredom troubles the Baudelairean poet's method of being "on the lookout for banal incidents in order to liken them to poetic events" (Benjamin *The Writer* 127). For Nova, there is no transformative quality to the mundane everyday item; nor is there, through orgasm, a deliverance from mundane, everyday life. Similarly, there is no transformation of the everyday image into the poetic image—this appears to be a deliberate stylistic choice. There is also, in this scene, the added bonus of a powerful representation of the female flâneur's sexuality that is not related to prostitution, or in service of the male gaze.

Despite the fact that the flânerie of the characters in Thorup's text is usually enforced rather than chosen, the characters still exhibit many of the same pleasures, characteristics, and talents as does Baudelaire's poet-flâneur. In the nightclub, Mark enjoys the solitude of the multitude: "det generede ikke Marc at de stod klemt sammen i en klump ligesom han nød at køre i bus i myldretiden og mærke varmen fra folk han ikke kendte og som var ham helt ligegyldige" [Mark didn't mind that they stood crammed together with a lot of other people, just as he enjoyed riding the bus during rush hour and feeling the warmth from people who were strangers and meant nothing to him] (Thorup 22; Christensen 14). A working-class cafeteria that echoes "som i en fabrikshal" [like a factory building] (Thorup 27; Christensen 19) stands in for the Parisian café. Cadett sits with her friend Leni who enjoys the details of the scene: "og der var store glasruder ud til gaden og Leni så en pepsicola reklame som hang på svingdøren ud til køkkenet" [and there were large plate-glass windows facing out to the street and Leni noticed a Pepsi-cola ad hanging on the swinging door out to the kitchen] (Thorup 27; Christensen19). Acute attention paid to mundane details (the trademark of the flâneur's perception) runs throughout *Baby*; we see it combined here with a social-realist attention to everyday signs of economic imperialism.

We are reminded of Benjamin's characterization of the flâneur's obsession with the detail of the present and immediate. Just as the Benjaminian flâneur would trade all his knowledge of princely palaces, that is, the political workings of those in power, for the "touch of a single weathered tile—that which any old dog carries away" ("The Return of the *Flâneur*" 263), so are Thorup's flâneurs, for all their misery, poverty, and general boredom incurred by their class struggle, acutely observant and curious about their immediate surroundings. Thorup's text is made up of the sensory perceptions of her working-class flâneurs; however, because they are of the crowd, they are also, like other image-objects, embedded in the image of their environment: Leni and Cadett leave the cafeteria; Cadett "havde en sort frakke i en tidløs klassisk facon og der var noget upersonligt og anonymt ved hendes udseende og Leni tog hende under armen somom de var et ægtepar somom de var figurer i et landskab og de drejede ned ad en åben blæsende gade og de fik røde kinder" [was wearing a black coat of a classic style. There was something impersonal and anonymous about her appearance and Leni held her arm as though they were a married couple, as though they were figures in a landscape and they turned down a broad, windy street and they got rosy cheeks] (Thorup 31; Christensen 22-23). Despite being embedded in their social class, Thorup's flâneurs retain a dignity that is inherent to their lonely desire to be self-determined.

So far we have discussed the crowd as a metaphor that works towards the organization of the narrative and its images. In this way the crowd is used, for the most part, to compose a negative, if sympathetic, depiction of working-class life. However, there is also an empowering use of the metaphor of the crowd in Thorup's novel, one that emphasizes the sentence over narrative structure, sound over sight, rhythm over image. This will be my focus for the remainder of the chapter—the crowd as symbolic of the multi-voiced text in which no one voice or position supersedes any other; this coincides with a breakdown of the conventional form of the sentence. The language in Thorup's novel is the language of the crowd: there is no place outside of this crowd, no internal or allegorical retreat, no isolation for either reader or character. Although Thorup clearly connects stylistic "constraint" to class issues, in ways that will be discussed shortly, the aggressive movement and claustrophobic threat of the crowd we see in Baudelaire is, in Thorup's work, transformed into a positive linguistic fluidity that allows for a reading and listening experience that erases individual authority while troubling the limits of the body and the text. The space of the crowd becomes a metaphor for the shared space of the text. This involvement results in a bodily experience of language close to the one identified by Roland Barthes, in *The Pleasure of the Text*, when he enters the crowd as flâneur:

> One evening, half asleep on a banquette in a bar, just for fun I tried to enumerate all the languages within earshot: music, conversations, the sounds of chairs, glasses, a whole stereophony of which a square in Tangiers (as described by Severo Sarduy) is the exemplary site. That too spoke within me, and this so-called "interior" speech was very like the noise of the square, like that amassing of minor voices coming to me from the outside: I myself was a public square, a *sook*; through me passed words, tiny syntagms, bits of formulae, and *no sentence formed*, as though that were the law of such a language. This speech, at once very cultural and very savage, was above all lexical, sporadic; it set up in me, through its apparent flow, a definitive discontinuity: this *non-sentence* was in no way something that could not have acceded to the sentence, that might have been there *before* the sentence; it was: what is eternally, splendidly, *outside the sentence*. Then, potentially, all linguistics fell, linguistics which believes only in the

> sentence and has always attributed an exorbitant dignity to predicative syntax (as the form of a logic, of a rationality). (49-50)

The crowd, for Barthes and Thorup alike, represents a resistance to the finishing-of-the-sentence. The Sentence, Barthes says, is "hierarchical: it implies subjections, subordinations, internal reactions. [. . .]. The Sentence is complete"; and "any completed utterance runs the risk of being ideological. In fact, it is the power of completion which defines sentence mastery and marks, as with a supreme, dearly won conquered *savoir-faire*, the agents of the Sentence." He goes on to identify these agents, who have been, historically, enemies of the flâneur: "[t]he professor is someone who finishes his sentences. The politician being interviewed clearly takes a great deal of trouble to imagine an ending to his sentence: and if he stopped short? His entire policy would be jeopardized!" (50). Language that is outside of the sentence threatens ideological law and the Law of the Polis. This fragmented language, in the form of the run-on sentence, is the textual language of *Baby*, and the speech of Thorup's disenfranchised flâneurs.

The rhythm of the prose throughout the novel creates a sense of a sustained, open-ended emergency which aligns the characters' hand-to-mouth existence with the anxiety produced by the experience of reading. The stories of characters that are trapped by their social circumstances are written in a sort of breathless baby-talk characterized by a relentless repetition of the conjunction "and" that mimics the rhythm of mechanical reproduction, and the aimless movement of the novel's characters around Vesterbro, the working-class district of Copenhagen.[79] A sentence formation (that at first seems simple) can be read to symbolize, but also determine (in terms of how language creates consciousness) a working-class person's limited power within the dominant culture and its discourses. Charlotte Schiander Gray notes that: "the run-on sentence structure and dispassionate tone avoid sentimentality but also suggest the characters' lack of any coherent vision or meaningful order. Socially powerless, Marc and the other characters live like babies in the pleasure seeking immediacy of the present" (437). Thorup's characters, unable to imagine a future, buy sweets, gamble, put what they want on credit. They are dark parodies of the artist-flâneur that Baudelaire calls a "man-child" ("The Painter" 399) who "sees everything as a novelty" (398). For Baudelaire, a childlike, detail-oriented impression of the world resembles the poet's inspiration, whereas in *Baby* it is a sign of consumer distraction, arrested development, and social inertia.

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[79] As a young woman Thorup lived in Vesterbro; her working-class milieus are said to have contributed to her interest in social realism. As well, Charlotte S. Gray attributes the social content of *Baby* to Thorup's childhood experience playing with

The run-on sentence is often used to connote an individual's flight mode: a quick physical or mental movement that is a survival mechanism involving immediate and trivial thoughts and perceptions that pile on top of each other in an effort to repress the larger, unmanageable social problems that frame the individual's life. We see the run-on sentence work this way in our introduction to Nova, whose frantic existence is articulated through pieces of language that are unable to find satisfactory rest in a sentence:

> Nova vågnede og hun havde glemt hvor hun var og hun kravlede rundt i mørket efter sin taske og hun fik kuldegysninger ved tanken om at hun ikke havde nogen penge og hun gættede på at hun havde sovet i 3-4 timer og at det var eftermiddag. Hun tog sin jakke på. Hun var bange for at miste den og det hårde cementgulv

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children who lived in local welfare institutions; she "quickly realized how they were trapped by their social circumstances" and later, "she grew interested in their experiences, and in the psychological impact of difficult social conditions" (Gray) 435-440.

skrabede hendes knæ og hun havde ligget på nogle sække og der var et lille firkantet vindue som ikke kunne lukkes op og ruden var dækket af sod og sækkene var fugtige og klamme og det var d. 10. juli. Nova havde grønne fløjlsbukser og brune gummistøvler og sort krøllet hår og hun havde ringe af sølv og plastik på fingrene og hun satte sig på sækkene og hun var træt somom det var nat og kælderen vendte ud til en baggård og døren stod på klem. Hun havde glemt at lukke den og hun kunne høre en radio og hun tog sin spejderdolk som hun havde lagt under sækkene og hun satte den i sit bælte. Hun havde været blåmejse og hun havde ingen barndomserindringer og hendes mor havde smidt hende ud så snart hun begyndte at gå i seng med drenge og hun skulle have haft en læreplads i en skotøjsforretning i Frederiksborggade og hun vidste ikke hvad det var der havde fået hende til at blive væk. (Thorup 88)

Nova woke up and she had forgotten where she was and she crawled around in the dark looking for her handbag and the thought that she did not have any money made shivers run down her spine and she guessed that she had slept for three or four hours and that it was afternoon. She put on her jacket. She was afraid of losing it, and the hard cement floor had scraped her knee and she had been lying on some burlap sacks and there was a small square window which could not be opened and the panes were covered with soot and the sacks were musty and damp and it was the 10th of July. Nova was wearing a pair of green velvet pants and brown rubber boots and her hair was black and curly and on her fingers were silver and plastic rings and she sat down on the sacks feeling as tired as if it were night already and the cellar door opened out into a backyard and the door was

> ajar. She had forgotten to close it and she could hear a radio playing and she picked up her Girl Scout knife which she had hidden under the sacks and put it into her belt. She had been a Brownie and she had no childhood memories and her mother had thrown her out when she began to sleep with boys and she was supposed to have had a job in a shoe store in *Fredericksborgade* and she did not know why she had not taken it. (Christensen 71)

The reader runs alongside Thorup's sentences, taking the occasional break only to catch her breath: "She put on her jacket." By becoming aware of her breath, the reader is brought into the urgent and frantic "crowd scene" of the text that is made up of perspectives that are arbitrarily brought together by the use of the word "and," much in the way strangers come together in the space of the market. Fragments of Nova's thoughts merge with the acute perceptions of some near-by flâneur who describes, in fetishizing detail, Nova's body; following at a bit of a distance is a narrator offering bits of action, the date. Nova, her implied spectator, narrator, and reader all meet in the "square" of the page.

In this relationship of language and social reality, we find the word "and" to be as much a subject as the disenfranchised flâneur: language, as it composes the social subject, is the subject of the novel. Thorup's text is organized around the conjunction, or by the conjunction, in a similar way to how the fragmented city, as a kaleidoscope or labyrinth, is constructed by or around the flâneur: both "and" and flâneur act as a force in their respective texts, pushing forth, accumulating fragments, with no attainable, final composite image or language structure in mind. Text and city remain tentatively held together by this "and" that suggests there is always more to add. The pressing flow and arbitrary stops of Thorup's sentences resemble the flâneur's experience in the crowd: where each impression is quickly succeeded by another so that all value becomes equal. This movement that resists order involves the flâneur in the endless deferral of overarching or unified meaning. The flâneur is the artist who is always just about to get down to the act of composition, but who always prolongs this finalizing process by way of his perpetual walks through the city. We see a similar deferral with the repeated use of the conjunction "and" that reminds us of the speech-act that defers any sense of grammatical finitude.

However, this deferral is politicized in Thorup, which is not the case in Baudelaire. The flâneurs in *Baby* all live transient or semi-transient lives that detain them from organizing their thoughts and actions into cohesive plans. The "and" which levels the grammatical hierarchy of the sentence also levels the value of the content so that "having no childhood memories" which would normally be a shocking statement—perhaps punctuated, accordingly, with a period—is given as much rhythmic weight as being a "Brownie," or as a potential job in a shoe store. The "and," which holds the sentence in the continuous present, evokes a general state of flânerie. However, added is attention to the social reality of the disenfranchised flâneur: the characters, that "are jobless, are in debt, or prostitute themselves" are, as Gray points out, "[l]ingering in the moment since they have no future" (436).

Repetition that signifies the inertia of the homeless and working poor happens not only on the level of the sentence, but also in the broad structure of the book. Torben Brostrøm points out that "[t]he stories of most of the groupings [of characters] are taken up twice in the course of the novel, and it is made plain that there is no question of development, merely of a sequence of chance events leading to fresh problems" ("It's Thorup Today" 71-72). Each chapter ends with a character facing an immediate crisis: a loss of a job, a car crash, a murder—events that in the arc of a conventional story would precipitate some change: for better or for worse.However, Gray points out that in Thorup's work "the characters' quest for identity is not that of the traditional bildungsroman, for they do not develop and mature gradually over a period of time" (439). In other works, Thorup confounds conventional narrative by having her characters remake themselves in sudden bursts; in *Baby* conventional characterization, and thus narrative, is confounded by a total lack of development. When a character is reintroduced a few chapters after their crisis—the lapse effectively suggesting not only the passing of time, but also the character's repression of pain, and society's abandonment of the working-class—we find that, following the critical juncture in his or her life, no real change has occurred. Feelings of grief and misfortune are buried beneath a basic need to survive. Chapter three ends with Karla's (a single working mother) loss of her daughter Isa to a simple cold that turns into pneumonia because of the poor heating in her community-housing apartment. We are introduced to Karla again in Chapter nine which opens like this:

> Karla følte at hun altid tænkte på Isa og hun sad ved et bånd hvor der var fællesakkord og fabrikken var dårlig bygget og der var noget i vejen med ventilationssystemet og Karla fik udslæt på hænderne og halsen af varme og der var træk langs gulvet og fabrikshallen var altfor stor og vinduerne sad højt oppe og hun havde ikke tid til at skifte stilling og hun loddede og viklede og samlede 16 radiodele i min. og hun havde ondt i hovedet og nakken og lyset i hallen var

> hvidt og neutralt og der var ingen skygger eller halvmørke og hun havde en khakifarvet bluse på og i pausen snakkede de om børneopdragelse og Karla drejede sin stol. (Thorup 178)

> Karla felt that she was always thinking about Isa and she worked on a production line doing piecework and the factory was poorly built and there was something wrong with the ventilation system and Karla's neck and hands broke out in a rash from the heat and the floors were drafty and the room was much too large and the windows were up high and she did not have time to change her sitting positions and she soldered and coiled and collected 16 radio parts per minute and her head and neck ached and the light in the room was white and neutral and there were no shadows or dark corners and she was wearing a khaki-colored blouse and during the break they talked about raising children and Karla turned her chair around. (Christensen 151)

This passage illustrates the intense influence of Marxism on Danish writing from the 1970s (Houe 448), and can be read in the context of the theory of capitalist factory production found in *Das Kapital* in which Marx writes “‘the worker does not make use of the working conditions. The working conditions make use of the worker; but it takes machinery to give this reversal a technologically concrete form.’” The rhythmic use of “and,” in this case, is meant to imitate the rhythm of production where workers coordinate “‘their own movements with the uniformly constant movements of an automaton’” (Marx qtd. in Benjamin *The Writer* 191).

This kind of movement is antithetical to the kind that nourishes memory. We see, in the above passage from *Baby*, a relationship between a Marxist view on capitalist production in the factory and the compartmentalizing and impoverishment of personal memory. When discussing Marx's theory of factory work, Benjamin says the "unskilled worker is the one most deeply degraded by machine training. His work has been sealed off from experience; practice counts for nothing in the factory" (*The Writer* 192). The division of labour in the factory forces the unskilled worker to adapt to a repeated movement of an automated machine; now, as part of a machine, the worker's physical action, that is isolated from the other parts of production of the whole, corresponds to the numbing of intellectual activity, such as memory.

We see this numbing-of-memory occur as the self-regulated force of the machine is mimicked in the force of the language of this passage. Although we are told that Karla feels she is always thinking about Isa, Isa is immediately dropped from the narrative and replaced by the immediacy of Karla's physical discomfort at her machine and from the poor working conditions of the factory. Because Karla works on 16 radio parts per minute she is unable to think of Isa. The machinery's pace that promotes this "forgetfulness" is imitated in the pace of the prose as the "and" seems to move the "production" of language in a forward direction only. It is only when there is a work break that Isa is returned to the narrative for a moment, as a suggestion, but one that Karla cannot acknowledge with language. (She turns herself away from her co-workers' discussion of children.) Karla *feels* she is always thinking of Isa. Karla has absorbed her painful memory into her body so that it merges with her machine-induced pain: worker and machine are united. Similarly, the reader feels Karla's physical and mental pain in the rhythm, rather than content, of the language.

Benjamin relates the experience of this kind of factory worker to Poe's description of pedestrians in a crowd: "[h]is pedestrians act as if they had adapted themselves to machines and could express themselves only automatically" (*The Writer* 192). The monotonous rhythm throughout the novel, that is driven by this repeated "and," may be seen to represent the single unchanging voice that envelopes all the characters in a sameness—the voice of the masses or the crowd that may be likened to the rhythm of the factory. However, as several critics have pointed out, this reading of the rhythm of the prose is complicated by the fact that the monotonous, machine-like repetition may also be read as rebellious and resistant force of the masses. This combination of repetition and resistance has one reviewer identify *Baby* as a punk novel, its rhythm resembling that of punk music: "[t]he beat of the prose [. . .] pounds like a pile driver, grating and monotonous at it worst, though more often with a strange underground energy."[80] This essay locates the novel's sense of rebellion and hope here: in its rhythm and unruly grammar.

However, a number of critics wish to locate hope, not in the style, but in the feminist content of the work that affords the female characters a certain amount of social freedom. Timothy R. Tangherlini, for example, equates their emancipation with the "dissolution of their relationships with men" (Tangherlini 324). Rather than reading men and women's inability to sustain personal partnerships as a tragic outcome of their poverty, he sees it as a triumph for feminism. Women's break from men is a break "from the oppression of the system [which] is to define one's own feminine outside of economically and sexually oppressive male-based societal constructs" (324). While there may be some hope for Leni when she breaks off her business partnership with Eddy (she translates pornography for him), it is difficult to believe, as Tangherlini does, that Cadett or Karla have a female identity waiting to be enacted in some system outside of the "male-based" one. In fact, I would argue that Thorup's novel suggests that such a thing is impossible. Karla is so blinded by guilt and grief over the death of her child, and her poverty, that she cannot see her way clear to a long-term relationship with her lover David, who is certainly in a financial position to help her. She says to him: "—Du kan ikke hjælpe mig, ikke i det lange løb" ['You can't help me—not in the long run'] (Thorup 192; Christensen 163). It is equally difficult to feel as though Cadett has achieved any self-actualization through her separation from Mark.

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[80] Carl Baily, "Nobody's Scared," rev. of *Baby*, *The Village Voice*, 1-7 Apr. 1981: 37.

Mark and Cadett talk about their divorce in practical terms; the development of love, and personal and social growth, is shown to be impossible in a social system that keeps its working class in a state of economic emergency. Mark says matter-of-factly to Cadett "—Vi må se og blive skilt i en fart [. . .]. Han skal ihvertfald ikke kunne komme og tage møblerne og radioen" ['We've got to make sure that we're divorced in a hurry (. . .). 'I don't want him (Eddy) to be able to come and take away the furniture and the radio'] (Thorup 144; Christensen 121). A moment later they are making love. Cadett still wants to sleep with Mark, she just doesn't want to share her finances with him. They fantasize about Mark marrying a rich woman who can support them both so they can be together. In fact, Mark and Cadett's drawn-out separation is heart-breaking and has little to do with, as Tangherini sees it, Cadett's "self-definition [. . .] based on terms other than those forced on [her] by society" (324).

The story of Cadett and Mark ends with Mark leaving Cadett and their child, promising to call, and ending up at "mandehjemmet" [Men's Home]: "og da han først var kommet gennem porten som førte fra gaden ind i en stor gård og stod på den lange gang hvor der sad en mand ved et lille firkantet bord og tog imod ham, så var alting tilrettelagt for ham somom han var ventet somom han havde en skæbne somom han var nødvendig for at få systemet til at fungere i den mørkerøde murstensbygning" [(w)hen he walked through the entrance and stood in the long hall where a man sitting at a small square table greeted him, everything seemed to have been arranged for him, as though he were expected, as though his fate were determined, as though he had an essential function in the dark red brick building] (Thorup 150; Christensen 126). Because the men and women of *Baby* are involved in the same class struggle that determines their fate, we cannot locate female emancipation in the narrative action of individual female characters, particularly not from their separation from men they love. Emancipation does not come from the narrative; it comes, instead, from the rebellious force of the language: the repeated "and."

Hope comes with our reading process. While we read, the repetition of the word "and" becomes nuanced. With each individual instance of it we begin to recognize slight variations in emphasis and rhythm. Repetition becomes insistence in the sense that Gertrude Stein meant it in her essay "Portraits and Repetition":

> Is there repetition or is there insistence. I am inclined to believe there is no such thing as repetition. And really how can there be [. . .]. [O]nce started expressing this thing, expressing any thing there can be no repetition because the essence of that expression is insistence, and if you insist you must each time use emphasis

> and if you use emphasis it is not possible while anybody is alive that they should use exactly the same emphasis. (99)

Thorup's use of "and" *is* meant to function as a symbol of repetition—to act as the symbol of the disenfranchised worker; however, its function is then altered so that its "work" is not redundant, or purely mechanical. She challenges the conception of the crowd as "the masses" by challenging the conventional understanding and limited function of the conjunction, as defined by Aristotle in *ThePoietic Art*: "[a] connective is a non-significant sound which neither prevents nor produces the union of many sounds into one significant sound and which cannot naturally stand at the beginning of an utterance" ("Appendix B: wording, lexis, and principles of style," [1457a] 149). In *Baby*, the "and" becomes significant by drawing attention to itself through repetition and unexpected placement. It makes the banal exceptional in its hereness, in a collaboration between the page and the reader. Subsequently, the "and" affects our experience of the narrative action so that each moment in the life of a worker translates into a unique language event.

The function of this "and" is closer to Stein's understanding than Aristotle's. She says that "[v]erbs and adverbs and articles and conjunctions and prepositions are lively because they all do something and as long as anything does something it keeps alive" ("Poetry and Grammr" 126). And for Stein the conjunction, in particular, represents a force in language: a conjunction "has a force that need not make any one feel that they are dull. Conjunctions have made themselves live by their work. They work and as they work they live and even when they do not work and in these days they do not always live by work still nevertheless they do live" ("Poetry and Grammar" 125). It is this force of the conjunction that saves Thorup's characters from seeming dull. Torben Brostrøm remarks that the characters in *Baby* are "enchanting" and "melodious in all their emotional poverty." This melody is "buried in the underlying tensions and conflicts, in the enormous sense of lack which conditions their lives" (70-71).

The Canadian poet Erin Mouré politicizes Stein's break-down of the grammatical hierarchy of the sentence by comparing a sentence's organization to how citizens are organized in their culture. For Mouré, the devalued parts of language are female: "[a]s if the preposition is the woman's sign because it is relational. But can't get anywhere, because in the language it has no power, & can't exist alone" ("The Acts," *Furious* 97). In this analogy, Thorup's "and" may also be considered a woman's sign: according to conventional grammar the conjunction holds no value; it is relational. Mouré proposes that we disrupt conventional language structures, "break down the noun/verb opposition wherein the present so-called 'power' of the language resides" by making the disempowered (female) parts of the sentence central forces in a work (93). This is, of course, what Thorup does with her insistent "and." As with Mouré's preposition, to empower the conjunction is to "signify and utter motion, the motion of the utterence." Mouré puts "[t]he Motion before the Name" and so transforms the marginalized parts of speech into "flâneurs," that, because they are relational, are also "of the crowd." Letting these marginalized parts of speech enter the field of writing "'out of order'" creates a stutter in the work that mimics the flâneur's jerky gate (Mouré, "The Acts"94-95). In *Baby* we see this pace created when the run-on sentence is pressed against a short succinct one. The female flâneur's defiant mobility is made visible in the movement of the language, a movement made possible by privileging the "and," the part of speech that is relational. By putting movement before naming, Thorup's novel puts sound before sense, form before content, and it is here that the female flâneur's force becomes perceptible.

On a narrative level, the fact that "[n]one of the characters has a goal either consciously or unconsciously" (Tangherlini 321), and that characters either "have no childhood memories" like Nova, or repress them, like Karla, suggests poverty denies one of memory and imagination: it keeps one out of history, storytelling, and holds one in the impoverished present. However, the movement of language in *Baby* suggests something different—an experience of modernity as the experience of the potential creative force of the continuous present: "[w]e in this period have not lived in remembering, we have living in moving being necessarily so intense that existing is indeed something, is indeed that thing we are doing" ("Portraits and Repetition" 108).

Benjamin confirms for us that "Baudelaire's original interest in allegory is not linguistic but optical. 'Les images, ma grande, ma primitive passion'" (Baudelaire qtd. in Benjamin, *The Writer* 164). This chapter has attempted to extend the method Baudelaire develops around the primacy of the image to a primacy of grammatical processes: Thorup's use of the "and" does to the convention of the sentence what Baudelaire's allegorical image does to the subject-conventions of the poem. Baudelaire's allegory "wrench[es . . .] things from their familiar contexts" (*The Writer* 148); Benjamin credits Baudelaire with writing "the first book of poetry [*Les Fleurs du mal*] to use not only words of ordinary provenance but words of urban origin as well" (128). He puts the classical together with the modern, the fleeting with the universal; his "revolutionary" power is found in these sudden contrasts. In a similar employment of surprise contrasts, Thorup uses the "and" to disharmoniously join together insignificant details with monstrous realizations: "Nova havde stadigvæk ondt i maven og hun orkede ikke at bede nogen om en 25 øre, ikke engang jesusbørnene og hun kunne ikke bryde ud i sang og hun kunne ikke blive et barn og hun spyttede på gulvet og hun tværede spytklatten ud med storetåen" [Nova still had stomach cramps and she could not bear to ask someone else for 25 *øre* for the toilet, not even the Jesus people, and she could not burst into song and she could not become a child again and she spit on the floor and rubbed away the glob of spit with her big toe] (Thorup 93; Christensen 75).

It is in the discrepancy between the described oppressive and mundane conditions of the characters' lives, and the willful energy of the language, the work of the conjunction—meant to act as resistance to the conditions of their lives—that we find the hope of the novel, and the heroism. The fact that the life of the novel is located in its language re-enforces the idea that if we are to articulate the female's experience of urban space—that is—change the subject matter of flânerie, it must be through a language that questions the history of the subordination of the feminine, of the working class, and other marginalized groups, that is at work in the very structure of the sentence and function of its parts as we are reading.

Chapter 4. Daphne Marlatt: Step-by-Step in the Textual Labyrinth

The curve is ruinous, difficult and dangerous

Le Corbusier[81]

Obviously, you can't make it down to more primary levels of consciousness by walking in the same old ways down the same old streets [. . .]. And this shift to a circling, side-winding, wandering progression opens out liberating possibilities for the man of words.

Warren Tallman[82]

In the last two chapters we have looked at female flânerie through the re-worked motifs of the passante and the crowd, respectively. Our reading of the passante in *According to the Law* allows the shock-of-modernity to include the figurative sense trauma, and thus extends the motif of shock to the long experience and the subject position. In what might be considered an initial phase of the female flâneur, this passante gestures toward, but does not find a form for, what is repressed by dominant structures of grammar and thought. In *Baby,* the movement of language that is in excess of established forms of knowledge and grammar is more fully realized by a leveling the hierarchy of these forms. This is done by way of the repeated use of the conjunction "and." I have made a correlation between this linguistic experiment and the figurative motif of the crowd. This is a motif of Baudelaire's that I have re-worked so that it is not the abstract ground out of which the privileged image emerges, but a moving plain of which each and any part may be given our attention. Symbolically, this allows us to rethink the relationship between social hierarchy, and the hierarchy of grammar: of the sentence. Both of these chapters debunk the conception of flânerie as a primarily social practice, and move towards a flânerie that is a reading and writing practice by which we understand the construction of the social world.

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[81] Le Corbusier, *The City of Tomorrow* 28.
[82] Warren Tallman, "The Writing Life" 151.

In this chapter we will look at how Daphne Marlatt's architectonic writing, shaped by the metaphor of the labyrinth, may be seen as a reworking of the Baudelairean flâneur's labyrinthine city-as-text. Pauline Butling attributes this spatial experience of Marlatt's work to the way the "rhythms and textures of words foreground the physical presence of language" ("From Radical" 186). With this writing practice, Marlatt brings together the text and the city, while challenging the Laws that govern both: she privileges the poetic function over the communicative function of language. This results in an experience of the text as a surface to be traversed in a way that is antithetical to the theoretical ideology that governs the modern city. In order to understand Marlatt's use of the labyrinth as a metaphor for a radical writing practice that can be understood as textual flânerie, it is necessary to discuss the general theory of modern urban planning and what values it shares with modern-day language usage. This relationship between language and the city is explored by Erin Mouré in her essay "Poetry, Memory and the Polis."

It is most often presumed that the communicative function of language is more important than the poetic function. Mouré points out that this assumption is the organizing principle of the Law of the Polis. The city organizes the actions of those of us living in the modern city through "*binary thinking, hierarchical thinking. Thinking to the end*" which in turn becomes the "civic order that inhabits all of us" ("Poetry, Memory"

202). We see, for example, in the European architect Le Corbusier's[83] concept-city the privileging of the communicative function (the straight line), or "thinking to the end," as it provides the least amount of stress on the City as an organism:

> a modern city lives by the straight line, inevitably; for the construction of buildings, sewers and tunnels, highways, pavements. The circulation of traffic demands the straight line; it is the proper thing for the heart of a city. The curve is ruinous, difficult and dangerous; it is a paralyzing thing.
>
> The straight line enters into all human history, into all aim, into every human act. (*The City* 28)

This modern city is occupied by a man who is not a flâneur: he "walks in a straight line because he has a goal and knows where he is going; he has made up his mind to reach some particular place and he goes straight to it." This man "governs his feelings by his reason; he keeps his feelings and his instinct in check, subordinating them to the aim he has in view. [. . .]. Man must consider the result in advance" (23-24). It is assumed that any deviation from the straight line will result in sickness and death.

Le Corbusier's belief in a rational plan of the city exemplifies what tends to happen in discourse in general: as Mouré points out, thought "tends to resolve itself in a binary way" moving from here to there in a way that "decreas[es] anxiety in the organism." We tend to follow the set routes that re-enforce the structures in place.

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[83] As Jane Jacobs point out in her introduction to *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (23), Le Corbusier's dream city has had an enormous impact on North American cities. We can attribute to him the plan of skyscrapers within a park, the reduction of streets, the integration of the automobile into city planning: which was, in the 1920s and early 1930s, a new idea. All these plans conspired to keep pedestrians off the streets. Hence, Le Corbusier's plans, and by extension, those of modern North America cities, are antagonistic to the practices of the flâneur.

Nevertheless, binary thinking, like Le Corbusier's straight line, pushes aside the voices that impede progress through their refusal to assimilate. The Law of the Polis, like the "conceptual frameworks buried in language [. . .] reinforce[ ] heterocentrism, classism, racism, as well as sexism" ("Memory" 202).

Mouré finds a solution to this exclusion in the poetic function of language. She points out in "Breaking Boundaries" that "the communicative function of language [and by Mouré's thinking this includes all discourses in a society, including city planning] is not the only function, and it's probably not the most powerful or most important." The poetic function, "the function that ties rhythm, the body, our mothers, the unconscious (which does not fear contradiction)" pushes the boundaries of the communicative function and past it (20-21). This felt-knowledge (a privileging of practice over plan) that challenges the logic of the Polis is presumably a good thing, as the Law of the City, defined by the communicative function alone, is inevitably in "a continual process of decay" ("Poetry, Memory" 201). Mouré goes as far as to say that "entropy IS the organizing law of the City" (202). Poetry, understood as the sounds of words, suggests a memory that precedes and transgresses this Law, and so can undo it. Women, because they have been left outside of the collective memory that creates the city, carry a memory that is in excess of this Law. Mouré is interested in the great potential of women's memories to act as the poetic memory that undoes the Law maintained by civic memory.

Michel de Certeau elaborates on the argument brought up by Mouré: that entropy is the inevitable end of a discourse that represses the poetic function in favour of the communicative function. A city such as Le Corbusier's, which operates according to "rational organization" (94) of a controlled space, must reject everything that would compromise it. This "panorama-city is a 'theoretical' (that is, visual) simulacrum, in short a picture, whose condition of possibility is an oblivion and misunderstanding of practices" (93). Because it refuses what it cannot understand and control, the communicative function of the city (that's aim is progress) "repeatedly produces effects contrary to those at which it aims: the profit system generates a loss which, in the multiple forms of wretchedness and poverty outside the system and waste inside it, constantly turns production into 'expenditure'" (94-95). Since the Law "by privileging progress (i.e., time), causes the condition of its own possibility–space itself–to be forgotten" (95), the poetic renewal of the system must involve an understanding of how poetry is enacted through the sensory body, in space, and how this body's processes disrupt the plan, the visual, or what we can call the already-read or written.

Michel de Certeau attributes the poetic function to the walkers. The scopic authority of the planner removes one from one's own body as well as the seething body of the masses: on top of the world trade centre looking down one feels a "lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more" (92). On the ground are the walkers "whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban 'text' they write without being able to read it" (93). From this blindness, or felt-knowledge, comes practices that are foreign to the "'geometrical'" space of "visual, panoptic, or theoretical constructions." de Certeau calls these practices the "poetic and mythical experience of space" (93).

This poetic blindness may be associated with writing that emphasizes practice over plan. Baudelaire's street-level flâneur comes much closer to a poetics interested in the immediacy of surroundings and the moment of writing than Benjamin's critic-flâneur who, as Deborah Parsons observes, retreats to a place of "scopic authority, yet static detachment" once the arcades are destroyed (6). This is a retreat to a place of historical perspective related to Benjamin's retrospective attempt to re-invent Baudelaire as "the representative writer of urban capitalist modernity" whose poetry "often against its express intent—laid open the structure and mechanisms of his age." Michael Jennings discusses how Benjamin radically reoriented us to consider Baudelaire outside of purely aesthetic terms (as a late Romantic or forerunner for the French Symbolists) by making him into "a complex object: a largely apolitical writer whose poetry we must nevertheless comprehend before we can formulate any responsible cultural politics of modernity" (Jennings 1-2).

In order to discuss the emphasis Marlatt places on practice and felt-knowledge over plan, and how this relates to the poetics of female flânerie, I would like to return focus to the street-level vision of Baudelaire's flâneur (limited and fragmented by the crowds and winding streets) to underscore the fact that regardless of what a poet's work reveals about the particulars of his age in the context of history, a radical poetics such as Baudelaire's begins with the writer in the present, lost in language, writing without intent, and yet in a state of extreme concentration.

This need to radicalize language comes with a primal recognition that the abstraction of thought has lead to some intolerable consequence for human existence. Baudelaire saw the commodification of language turn the poet himself into a commodity; the poet Charles Olson, referring to recent history, wrote in 1950 that "[w]hen man is reduced to so much fat for soap, superphosphate for soil, fillings and shoes for sale, he has to begin again, one answer, one point of resistance only [. . .]. It is his own physiology he is forced to arrive at" ("The Resistance," *Selected* 13).

Daphne Marlatt, in her essay "Musing with Mothertongue," extends Olson's resistance to include that against the commodification of women by patriarchal language. She finds a solution in a return to the body, to "matter and by extension mother" where "language is first of all for us a body of sound." If we attend to this mother-tongue, "sound will initiate thought by a process of association. words call each other up, evoke each other, provoke each other, nudge each other into utterence"; a re-writing of the feminine subject becomes possible this way (10-11).

What Balle, Thorup, and Marlatt share is an instinctual return to the body of sound as a trusted source for the revitalization of language (thought) in crisis. My emphasis has been on the female flâneur's response to this call, her poetic flânerie, and how it happens in the continuous present, through the body in its particular location. This is in opposition to an out-of-body historical or consequential look at how the motif of the flâneur works as vehicle for the vision of the poet's age—which is secondary to the event of writing, no matter how significant the findings are. In an essay on Gertrude Stein called "Here," the poet Robert Creeley argues for the importance of attending to the present this way:

> One sturdy fact of existence would seem to me at least that whatever *happens* in the world, or can be said to have happened or to be about to happen, or eventually, is, by nature of the necessity constituted by the statement itself, happening *now*. There seemingly is no other 'place' for it to occur. Of course there are endlessly possible patterns of causality, most usefully so very often, but their reality also is dependent on this specific *now* insofar as they presume a precedent or a consequence for what it is (*now*) they are involved with. (84)

This attempt to understand and articulate this sense of the continuous present in writing: “Words. Now. Here.” (Creeley, “Here” 85), is what Creeley identifies as the work of late modernism—it was the life work of Gertrude Stein that was continued by Creeley’s own generation of writers: Charles Olson, Robert Duncan and the other poets of the Black Mountain College.[84] However, it can also be said to be an extension the project of Baudelaire’s “poetic prose,” which is similar Olson’s “projective verse” that aims to open up “the inherited line” (which we can associate with Le Corbusier’s straight line) into an open field (“Projective Verse,” *Selected* 16). Olson’s field metaphor corresponds with Baudelaire’s old city centre as a place of possibility for the writing body to return to an elemental intimate encounter with the *experience* of writing, distinct from any way one thinks or plans for it to go. The old forms are as unsuitable for Olson’s time, as they were for Baudelaire’s; language is “returned to its place *in* experience” (Creeley, “introduction” *Selected* 5).

Olson, like Baudelaire, saw that the sensory body (as a locale of language) required the poet be rooted in a particular locale of place.[85] In the letter of dedication that opens *Paris Spleen* Baudelaire writes: "[w]hich one of us, in his moments of ambition, has not dreamed of the miracle of a poetic prose, musical, without rhythm and without rhyme [. . .]? It was, above all, out of my exploration of huge cities, out of the medley of their innumerable interrelations, that this haunting ideal was born" (ix-x). Olson's Gloucester-ian flâneur reminds one of Baudelaire's Parisian flâneur. Olson "walks the streets, beaches and heights letting slow footsteps discern old roads, boundaries, property lines, building sites. Feet of Gloucester." Going further than Baudelaire, Olson searches documents, records, manuscripts, "search[ing] out the phrasings, weightings and soundings of both the speech around him and that discernible in the writings of the place" until he "takes on in his form a form of that city" (Tallman, "Proprioception"163).

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[84] Black Mountain College was an experimental school started in the early thirties by John Rice and others in the Mountains of North Carolina. It continued into the 1950s, producing a literary magazine called *The Black Mountain Review*.

[85] The urgent rush in Olson’s poetry may be compared to the violent image in Baudelaire’s: their styles are the response of the poet witnessing his quickly disappearing locale. Baudelaire laments in his poem "*Le Cygne*" ["The Swan"] *The Flowers of Evil*, 175, that: "The old Paris is gone (the form a city takes,/More quickly shifts, alas, than does the mortal heart)"; We are reminded of the jarring overhaul to Parisian streets, that changed the practices of Baudelaire’s flâneur, when Creeley tells us that “ Olson fought fiercely against the widening of a street in his home town of Gloucester, Massachusetts. He knew that ‘habits and haunts’ were never merely conveniences, something to be got by purchase or intent. Such incremental ‘world’ was all that could and did remain of so much ‘history’ a submerged ledge of previous uses offering the only way back or forward. If one moved the road, then one changed unwittingly the consequences of those

The difference between the Old World European poet-flâneur and this new North American one is that Baudelaire's works predominantly with an eye to produce the image which is devoid of emotion; his flâneur is a unique witness more than a human antenna. Poets like Charles Olson, on the other hand, "lead[...] poetry out of an age of perception into a new age of proprioception." This is a term of Olson's which he defines as a "sensibility within the organism by movement of its own tissues" (Tallman, "Wonder Merchants" 178).Tallman makes the distinction between the terms this way:

> The eyes of perception take the snow in *Out There*. The eyes of proprioception become an inner threshing floor on which a snow man will be enacted. The perceptive writer sees himself in the midst of the surrounding world as object. The proprioceptive writer sees the surrounding world in the midst of himself as subject. ("Wonder Merchants" 178)

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who had travelled it." Introduction, *Collected Prose*, ed. Donald Allen and Benjamin Friedlander (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1997) xiii.

Baudelaire's poet-flâneur has a unique perception that allows him to transform place through allegory; therefore, the image becomes more important that the object and is distinct from the object. However, he is still in the process of *transferring* place from perception "out there," to the page, which is also "out there," separate from the perceiving subject: "his steady gaze on a sheet of paper, exactly the same gaze as he directed just now at the things about him" (Baudelaire, "The Painter and Modern Life" 402). Olson does not maintain the threshold that Baudelaire does, between inside and outside, nor between mind (language) and body (perception). Or, to put it another way: "[e]ventually the city looks out through his eyes, speaks through his voice, remembers through his memory, has its meetings in his person" until the poet can say "L'etat, c'est moi. [. . .] each of us is his or her own city" ("Wonder Merchants" 179). This body-city is, according to Olson, huge like Baudelaire's metropolis, although the actual Gloucester is a small fishing village.

The poet's body as the locale that houses environment and language, bringing them together through the kinetics of the body (its motion, breath, ear, heart) leads to an art that "does not seek to describe but to enact" (Olson, "Human Universe" *Selected* 61). Therefore, "'subject' as a conceptual focus of order has given place to the literal activity of the writing itself" (Creeley, "Introduction to *The New,*"*Collected Essays* 93). To adopt this subjectivity to the current argument we can say that the flâneur exists only in the moment of flânerie. The poet's voice asks in "A Foot is to Kick With":

> —who knows what
> a poem ought to sound like? until it's thar? And how do you get it thar
> except as you do—*you*, and nobody else (who's a poet

What's
a poem?
It ain't dreamt until it walks[. . .].

(qtd. in Creeley, "Introduction to Charles Olson" *Collected Essays* 127).

Olson, who wanted the language of the poem to come close to speech, uses walking as a metaphor for how that happens, in a way that resembles de Certeau's: the "act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statements uttered": it is an "acting-out" of place or language (97-98). The literary flâneur is always present, and in the present, with language as it is happening, as is the pedestrian always in the present: at once here and always just passing by.

It is by way of Olson's proprioception that we approach the process of female flânerie and leave the nineteenth century flâneur's sense of the subject behind. As was previously mentioned, although Baudelaire's flâneur (at times) felt lost in the crowd, or "entered" various bodies in it, he still depended on a subject/object, mind/body split: the masterful eye's perception of the removed image-object.

The Tentative Touch of Female Flânerie

Irigaray tells us that woman's desire has been "submerged by the logic that has dominated the West since the time of the Greeks" which is defined by "the predominance of the visual, and of the discrimination and individualization of form" ("This Sex" *This Sex* 25). Olson's proprioception works out a way to be in the world and language that anticipates an approach women come to take: doing away with the proper (discrete) forms and being "in touch with herself, but without any possibility of distinguishing what is touching from what is touched" (26).

However, while the female flâneur breaks up "the inherited line" and finds her speech through her body's memory and engagement with her environment, it is not with the same unchecked rush of Olson's projective verse that dictates one "get on with it, keep moving, keep in, speed, the nerves, their speed, the perceptions [. . .] the split second acts, the whole business, keep it moving as fast as you can" ("Projective Verse," *Selected* 17). Olson specifies that the eye, ear, intellect and emotion mesh with language, image, sound, word, rhythm in "a single forward thrust as the moving finger writes" (Tallman, "Proprioception" 161).

As Pauline Butling points out, in radical literary communities, because it is assumed "aesthetic innovation goes hand in hand with progressive social relations" it is easy to miss the "inequities [. . .] embedded in aesthetic positions" ("Inside/Outside" 141). She uses Olson's Projective Verse as an example of this, citing Michael Davidson's observation of the gender bias embedded in Olson's "'phallic ideals of power, energy, and virtuosity.'"[86] Women's absence "'from the centers of artistic and intellectual life in general in the 1950s,' [Davidson] continues, was not only an effect of 1950s social formations (which excluded women from the category of artist) but also 'a structural necessity for the liberation of a new, male subject' in the new poetics" ("Inside/Outside"141).

This is why the suspicion of a purpose or shape to a piece of writing "which the literal act of writing does not itself discover" (Creeley, "A Sense of Measure" 486) *must itself be suspect*. Creeley says he is most interested in what is given to him to write, apart from what he intends (488). Intent is tied to the intellectual project of identity building that supposedly takes us away from the pure energy or activity of poem: its projection. Sharon Thesen, one of the many Canadian poets whose work exhibits the influence of Olson and Creeley, expresses the same misgivings of intention-in-writing in the context of the emerging feminist writing of the 1980s. Her response to "intent" echoes Creeley's. Thesen says: "many women write their poems with no intent whatsoever. I include myself among these, who are convinced of poetry's capacity to carry truth and vitality, but as a matter of process rather than of goal" ("Poetry and the Dilemma of Expression" 382). She argues that "the specifically female trace is likely to practice an iconoclasty whether or not it is revealed, whether or not revelation is the project of the surface or of the depths of the writing" (382). However, Butling's example of Olson stresses Mouré's point that "[t]he poem transgresses, precedes, but contains the Law too. And must therefore be subject to watchfulness" ("Poetry, Memory" 202): even in an avant-garde poetics (Olson's) that wants to do away with the ego of the poet, there is still the patriarchal Law of the Polis to contend with (since the greater project was to liberate a new male subject). Therefore, in terms of understanding the "goal" of writing in the feminine, it is important not to confuse *intent* with *attention* to language.

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[86] The dissemination of these phallic ideals is evident in the language used above: Tallman's description of Olson's Projective Verse.

Working towards a poetics of female flânerie means recognizing that the process under hand (or foot), that is immediate and attuned to the measure: the "swing from one/step to the touch of the next,"[87] as the poem reveals its order, occurs *in the same moment and space* that one is being attentive to the greater order of the Law. A theory of female flânerie thus stresses that one can simultaneously be inside the activity of writing and be attentive to its emerging structure, without being prescriptive.

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[87] George Bowering, "Walking Poem,"*George Bowering Selected: Poems 1961-1992*, ed. Roy Miki (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1993) 1-2.

As an analogy of how one must be continuously attentive to the received structures of language that one either accepts or rejects, one may consider the way the city dweller, especially a woman on city street, must be alert to the city's textual codes and its grammar (its procedures and its architecture). This discrepancy between the theory of some and practice of others is made clear in the central thesis of Jane Jacobs' book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*: like a "great, visible ego" (23), a city plan enforces the vision of a privileged and powerful group that provides the "pleasing appearance of order, without knowing what sort of innate, functioning order [a city] has" (14)/ Jacobs' call to revolutionize the way modern cities are built comes from the recognition of this flaw: "[t]here is a quality even meaner than outright ugliness or disorder [the living conditions of the poor and other marginalized groups], and this meaner quality is the dishonest mask of pretended order, achieved by ignoring or suppressing the real order that is struggling to exist and to be served" (15).[88]

To greater or lesser degrees, depending on the area of the city, the time of day, the number of people on the street, the lone female walker who has internalized the dangers of the city must make choices based on the way laws (official and unofficial) impede her walking; she must also be aware of the potential consequences of transgressing those laws. Even moments free from fear and alienation, of seemingly subject-less activity or reverie (that echo Creeley's and Thesen's poetic activity and energy) happen within the set frame of the city's plan designed without her mobility in mind.

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[88] Jacobs give the example of a conspicuous rectangular lawn used in housing project in New York's East Harlem that is hated by all the tenants of the project. She quotes one of people that lives there: "'Nobody cared what we wanted when they built this place [. . .]. But the big men come and look at that grass and say, 'Isn't it wonderful! Now the poor have everything!'" Cf. ("Introduction" 15).

Therefore, this hesitation must, then, not be seen to impede or taint her activity, but becomes a *defining part* of her female flânerie that marks the difference between the dominant plan, and the subordinated, but rebellious, practices. Correlatively, this anxious "hesitation," contrary to Olson's thrust, but related to the flâneur's loitering and jerky gate,[89] is part of the activity of literary female flânerie. This hesitation is the marker of the language practices of women that come up against the organizing patriarchal theories we take for granted because they are built into the structures of language we live "in" every day.

We see this hesitation of mobility figure predominantly in the style of Daphne Marlatt's poetic prose. Constant to her work is a trust in writing from her body that, nevertheless, pauses to overtly foreground the limitations of the language she must use and the potential opportunity to make "architectural" changes to it. Therefore, while Marlatt borrows a great deal from Olson that can be used to contribute to a theory of the flânerie of the text, Marlatt's movement of energy through the poetic field is different than Olson's. Hers is not the assertive thrust forward through an open field (just as it is not the strategic movement through the city centre), but a disorienting groping through a labyrinth of langauge. It is this motif of hesitation that defines a specifically female textual flânerie. Still, our argument about the contemporary shift in thinking about the flâneur (from the nineteenth century male subject-based flâneur to the female writing/process based one) can be understood in the influence Olson had on Marlatt.[90] We will outline the history of this influence and departure in following few paragraphs.

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[89] Benjamin compares the "jerky gate" of Baudelaire poetry to the gate of the flâneur-poet "who roams the city in search of rhyme-booty", who is in turn related to the ragpicker, a relative of the flâneur, "who stops on his path every few moments to pick up the refuse he encounters" Cf. (*Charles Baudelaire* 80). This suggests a correlation between attending to what is thrown aside by official culture, and a foregrounding of unconventional rhythm in modern poetry.

Marlatt was one of only two women who were involved in the 1960s radical poetics magazine *TISH: A Poetry Newsletter, Vancouver*. Its contributors and editors were heavily influenced by the Black Mountain poetics, particularly by Olson's open-form poetics which gave "directive to write about where you are [which] reinforced their desire for a locally based poetry and poetics" (Butling, "TISH: 'The Problem of Margins'" 48-51). Based on their connection with the Black Mountain poetics, the TISH poets "are credited with introducing an anti-lyric, speech-based, processual, open-form poetics combined with a historicized approach to the local. This poetics has since developed into a major strand of English Canadian Poetry" (50).

Studying Olson, and with Olson, Marlatt says, trained her to "get rid of the lyric ego [. . .] to pay strict attention to the conjoined movement of body (breath) and mind in the movement of the line." Through Olson's essays she opened up to the "delight in the extendible and finely balanced nature of the sentence ungoverned by line breaks." However, although Olson's approach opened up a compositional path for Marlatt, she would need to develop it to find a distinctly female process-based poetics. As she says: "it didn't occur to me then [. . .] whether my woman's body had different rhythms from [a man's] or whether my female experience might not give me an alternate 'stance' in the world (one that wasn't so much 'in' as both in & outside of a male-dominated politic & economy)" (Butling "Difference (em)bracing" 136). Marlatt's use of the labyrinth metaphor helps distinguish her "rhythm" and "stance" from Olson's; as well, while

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[90] Then, Daphne Buckle.

Marlatt's and Baudelaire's respective uses of the metaphor of the labyrinth both destabilize conventions of the text and the subjectivity of the writer, Marlatt takes a different route through the labyrinth than Baudelaire does.

Benjamin writes that "[b]ecause [Baudelaire] did not have any convictions, he assumed ever new forms himself. [. . .] for the modern hero is no hero; he is a portrayer of heroes" (*The Writer* 125). This hero maintains his incognito, or multiplicity, with the help of his labyrinthine text which, simultaneously, allows for revolutionary (language) acts—much in the way the winding streets of the old Parisian centre did for the French Revolutionaries. Benjamin continues:

> The incognito was the law of his poetry. His prosody is like the map of a big city in which one can move about inconspicuously, shielded by blocks of houses, gateways, courtyards. On this map, words are given clearly designated positions, just as conspirators are given designated positions before the outbreak of a revolt. Baudelaire conspires with language itself. He calculates it effects step by step (*The Writer* 128)

If Benjamin is correct, these carefully chosen words, strategically placed for a surprise "attack" on what reader and poem itself anticipate suggest Baudelaire's process (though rebellious like Marlatt's) is much more calculated than Marlatt's.

Although Benjamin may be right that the many masks Baudelaire wears provide him with the incognito needed to "avoid[. . .] revealing himself to the reader" (*The Writer* 127) and thus allow the writer-in-the-text to separate himself from the inherited traditions of Realism and Romanticism,[91] his sense of the labyrinth-city is similar to Marlatt's in that it also includes a sense of wandering, of being lost. As is pointed out in Jennings' introduction, Benjamin presents Baudelaire as writer whose work illuminates the "character of the age" and "claims a particular historical responsibility: in allowing itself to be marked by the ruptures and aporias of modern life" (Jennings 14-15); perhaps because of this reading of Baudelaire, Baudelaire's strategic resistance to old forms and style translates into a kind of expertise: that of the flâneur moving through his terrain, the city. However, those critics who read the flâneur only in this way, and insist that the flâneur's intimacy with the city makes him a master, or unifying agent, of an overall field, miss this central motif of disorientation, or being lost that Marlatt's poetics share with Baudelaire's.

For Marlatt, "The labyrinthine structure of the text, which may be entered but not easily traversed" is composed of passageways that "pose no easy passage." However, being lost offers opportunities as well as hardship. The labyrinth of the text is not only an imposed structure, but also an improvised one ("Here in the Labyrinth" 183); we are aware that we are contained—one feels one's way inside the "walls that exclude us [women]" ("Writing Our Way" 33), but also that the labyrinth of language, its "intercommunicating passages," allows us to slip "through claims to one-track meaning so that we can recover multiply-related meanings" (Marlatt, "Writing Our Way" 35). In the labyrinth we double back in language in a "continuous walking that folds back on itself and in folding back moves forward" (33). This is another way of saying, as Mouré does, that "[t]o precede the Law sometimes it is necessary to go back thru it" ("Poetry, Memory" 202).

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[91] Benjamin notes Andre Gide's observation that there is a "very calculated disharmony between [Baudelaire's] image and the object" and that Jules Lemaitre "speaks of forms that are designed to check an eruption of passion" (*The Writer* 127).

Frames of a Story/ Pathways of a Labyrinth

Marlatt's book length, experimental piece of writing *Frames: of a story* predates her critical writing that uses the Labyrinth as a metaphor for a woman's passage through language; and yet, we can see in *Frames* the labyrinth operating figuratively: as both a constraining frame, and as an evolving textual form composed through the process of tentative (attentive), though willful, textual flânerie.

Frames is Marlatt's retelling of the Hans Christian Andersen tale, *The Snow Queen*, that intersects with, overlaps, loses and picks up the thread of, an autobiographical love story of a faltering marriage. The formal scaffolding and bare-bones of the narrative of the Andersen story remains in Marlatt's telling: the work is divided into the basic chapters of the tale. We can follow the story of little Gerda who must go out into the world to find and retrieve her friend Kay from the ice palace of the Show Queen with the aid of a number of helpers and agents: the robber girl, the crows, the rain deer, the Finnish Woman, etcetera.

However, while *Frames* opens with a prosaic, temporally and spatially conventional, summary of the Andersen tale, it immediately splinters into a poetic "translation" of this summary which, with its radical sense of line and stanza formation, unusual punctuation, and use of sound associations over the conventional meaning of words, confounds the reader's desire for a clear path through the narrative. This disruption draws our attention to a shared theme at work in both Andersen's tale and

Marlatt's telling of it:[92] the relationship between innovative form and the body as a source of knowledge; in an interview with George Bowering Marlatt says that the "*avant-garde* is simply writing as close as you can to what you're actually experiencing at any given point. That's where the new forms arise" ("Given" 33). This theme suggests Gerda's journey is, in part, symbolic of an attention to the process of how one tells a story. This is a theme already present in the Andersen story: Gerda must repeat her own story, each step of the way, to new helpers in order to literally keep moving. The correlation between the physical body and language is linked further by a number of magical events that advance the action of the story: for example, the Lapp woman writes down a few words on a dried cod that she gives to Gerda to take to the Finn woman, who reads the cod a few times and then puts it in a pot to eat. (Nunnally 198).

The location of language in the body, what I have been referring to as "felt-knowledge," connects with a secondary theme shared by both works: the theme of being lost, which applies both to the journey of the characters, and to the reading experience. In Andersen's tale, this theme is worked out through narrative digressions and surreal images. Wullschlager points out that in Andersen's tale the "details are so rich, the twists of the story so exciting, that it is only in the final part that the overarching structure becomes clear" (254); in Marlatt' s telling, the narrative digressions are mimicked in the multi-directional pathways the reader can take through the experience of language itself. George Bowering says in his experience of Marlatt's writing "I can follow it but I don't know what I am following" ("Given" 39). A fundamental way that Marlatt establishes a labyrinthine experience of the text is with a juxtaposition of poetry and prose, the conventional line and its fragmentation, which works to foreground the materiality of the text, and the movement of hesitant flânerie over it. Pauline Butling describes this fragmentation process in Marlatt's work as a "to-and-fro relationship":

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[92] Andersen revolutionized the fairytale of his day, just as Marlatt does in her telling. Andersen's approach will be discussed a little later in the essay.

> Even as the thingness and presence of each word pushes against the narrative line, the narrative and metaphoric connections constantly pull the individual words into their integrative structures. This seesaw motion is partially an effect of the prose poem, a form that combines narrative and poetic elements in a constructive tension. The horizontal movements of prose (enacted in sentence and paragraph forms) intersect the verticality of the poetic word, creating multidirectional vectors. ("From Radical to Integral" 193)

This form and process began for Marlatt around the time she was writing *Frames*: she "was listening to the way speech was breaking in [her] mind. The way it was literally being other" and this had "a great deal to do with what [her] sense of line was at that point" ("Given" 44). We see this sense of line in the first lines of poetry that follow Marlatt's prosaic summary:

> *I. white as of the white room*
>
> Gerda 'n Kay actinic
>
> names that shatter
>
> walls
>
> step into light they leave
>
> this closet to be
>
> open include night

to make out of a lamp
of their names a dark
space

        these paper
characters of air?

no, but keep
names' mineral in hand
whose cold burns just
to keep in touch

Immediate is Marlatt's sound play: the word "actinic" is an adjective pertaining to the intrinsic property in radiation that produces photochemical activity; but in "actinic" we hear the rhyme "act in it." The sound associations of words introduces the idea of how the act of writing, the flanerie in the space of the page (the "*white as of the white room*"), allows for the "shatter[ing…of the] walls" of the preceding prose summary, and of the conventional line. We also see in the opening few stanzas of the poem, the introduction of the recurring motif of play between lightness and darkness: they "step into light" that "include[s]" night," which suggests the necessary relationship between language and the material body; conscious and unconscious processes, language as a system of signs and as a textual experience: the "paper/characters of air" are also "name's mineral" (material language). This is emphasized with the recurring motif of the hand moving across the page: "shapes flatter/glide into each other/but the hand wanting to know/picks a thing/out from center/so/our faces dimly seen but touch/wakes up the blood" (26). Direction is confounded further as motifs fail to signify in a binary way: light, though repeatedly presented as harsh light of reason, is also connected to the shameless, illuminated body, coming out of dark centre of the rose; at the end of Marlatt's story, when Kay and Gerda are returned to each other, "[t]hus unpealed, they stand nude in the luminous centre of themselves" (62); Andersen's sense of the Absolute: the Christianized symbol of the rose-of-innocence, is peeled back, and replaced with the shining body that reminds one of Charles Olson's line: " '[i]f there is any absolute, it is never more than this one, you, this instant, in action' " (qtd. in Bowering, *Left Hook* 83). The fragments of *Frames*, that lead to multiple associations of sound and sense, and to other texts, exhibit what Marlatt would later call "the labyrinth of language" that is "full of interconnecting passageways, trapdoors, melodious charms, vivid and often incomprehensible images on the walls, all of them pointing, pointing [her] farther along—the thread, the desire to know" ('Writing our Way" 32). The reader, as well as writer, finds herself inside the text, aware of the vast number of directions she may move through it.

Just as one often returns to where one has started in a labyrinth, or is unsure if one has, indeed, been in a place before, Marlatt doubles back in the text. One way she does this is by returning to the roots of words in sensory-play: she feels her way through language; the thread in her hands is "the desire to know, *gno*—" ("Writing our Way" 32). This play of "know" and "gno" suggests how one word calls up another through sound: to get to "know," which most commonly suggests the mind's intellectual certainty of something, we must go through its root “gno,” which suggests gnosis: a more intuitive, bodily, apprehension of knowledge. We see this word play that takes us back to the roots and sounds and associations of words: instead of “reindeer” we have a “rain dear.” (*Frames* 54) which calls up the connection to the earth that the animal in the tale suggests; instead of “Grandmother” we have “Grand mutter” (13) and are reminded of an ancient chant or song.

This labyrinthine structure and walk happens not only word to word on the material page, making the words sound in our body, but also to the narrative of the story, confounding the development of the tale with a mythic or dreamlike structure. The familiar story appears but them disappears into rhyme and “nonsense.” Marlatt’s text introduces motifs from the tale “too soon”: the shared blooming rose-beds of Gerda and Kay that signify their love and innocence are pre-empted by a “faded/crepe paper rose” that is like a faded photograph of a marriage framed by boredom rather than young love, a listless mulling about within the frame of the house: “you sit/scrape back your chair for a cigarette/walk to the window watch/ the trees waver/ one in another watch/ rooms to a star/ catapult through the upper/ section of window pane/ & want to say wait/ as a child calls/ wait for me” (5). Already, the husband is like Kay will be later, in Andersen’s tale, with the shard in his eye—pulling away, restless and looking out the window for the Snow Queen. Already, the wife, like Gerda, is feeling the loss and ready to follow.

Or else past plot points of the story return in motifs that contain their remembrance; consider the climax of the story, where Gerda finds the forgetful Kay in the Snow Queen’s palace:

> (is it real is it

really you?

[. . . . .]

no image in his eyes

grimness of ice

rims his fingers

over the pieces clicking

them together

keyless

stop it/see me

Kay say some

thing

        fish

beneath eyes' ice

(60)

We hear Key in Kay. The fish of the old Lapp woman returns, one of many times (elsewhere Kay "flicks/fishlike" in the Snow Queen's smile) (18), as do the rose, ice, light, birds, trains (of thought), doors, return again and again, until there is no telling where we are in the story that folds over itself: "Gerda what do you see?/[. . .] what do you not see?" (28); "where? in the world?" (50); "be?/where?" (52); the text is constantly asking questions about where it is, what it sees.

Translation as Transformation: The Historic Moment in the Mythic Landscape

Before going further into the themes of felt-knowledge, and being lost (in language) that are shared by Andersen and Marlatt, I want to relate the labyrinthine structure and processes of *Frames* (facilitated by this pull between prose and poetry, line and word) to another prominant theme: the theme of translation, as Marlatt uses it. Marlatt was first and foremost concerned with "making this fairytale real"; making it her story ("Given" 37): she introduced the historical moment into the telling of myths. Something, we shall she, she shares with Andersen. This is, as we have discussed in earlier chapters, an essential function of Baudelaire's flaneur; as well, it is the mark of the modern experience articulated in Baudelaire's famous statement : "the transient, the fleeting, the contigent; it is one half of art, the other being the eternal and the immovable" ("The Painter" 403). Translation, as Marlatt uses it, comes close to Walter Benjamin's argument for free translation that he describes in his essay "The Task of the Translator": this is not a theory of translation as equivalence, a search for sameness in a parallelism of content and expression, meaning and sound, or message that is transferred from one language to the other. Marlatt's formally radical version of *The Snow Queen*, for example, is written in English and works from a remembered English edition from her childhood. Benjamin's sense of translation is figurative and introduces into the theory of translation something that feminist theories of translation expands upon: the positive value of difference.

For Benjamin, a successful translation does not depend on the "the imparting of information" (69), (what, as we have read earlier, Moure calls the "communicative function of language"), or the "reproduction of meaning" (78). He says that "any translation which intends to perform a transmitting function cannot transmit anything but information—hence, something inessential." which is "the hallmark of a bad translation" (69). This kind of translation kills a work. What Benjamin finds to be the essential thing in the original that keeps the work alive in subsequent translations is, ironically, the very thing that cannot be translated. And this essential thing points to a "pure language" that subordinates both original and translation. Therefore, what becomes important is not the fidelity of the translation to the original, but the harmony and kinship between the two that point to a greater language. Benjamin uses the, now famous, metaphor of a broken vessel whose fragments are to be glued together: they must fit together, but they need not be like one another. Original and translation, then, are recognizable as fragments of a greater language, just as fragments make up a vessel (78).

Benjamin was not prepared to totally reassess the privileged status of the original; however, by positing the idea of a "pure" language that momentarily subordinates both the source text and its translation onto a level field, he enables a dialogue between the two. This dialogue is what Benjamin sees as the ultimate purpose of translation: to express the evolving process of language, based on the kinship-of-difference between them, and this dialogue's potential to renew both languages. This renewing force that produces itself in the evolution of languages is "that very nucleus of pure language" (79). We can say, then, that this triangular configuration of Benjamin's introduces the idea that the subject of any translation is the renewal or constant movement of language itself.

Translation, understood in this way, contributes to the theme of the movement-of-language, that, as we argued earlier, is the subject that emerges in the dialogue between Andersen's and Marlatt's telling of *The Snow Queen*,.

The story of the Snow Queen is a particularly good choice for a translation-as-transformation: it is one of Andersen's most popular tales that has been translated so often and into so many languages that the original Danish version recedes from the majority of readers' experience of the tale. Therefore, the original loses its authority; and yet, this disappearance allows each individual reader to have a very concrete experience of their particular translation, as a book object. The translation then acts as an original. Marlatt talks about this: she recalls her experience of the tale being intrinsically connected to the material object of the book: as an adult she found her childhood copy in which the ending has been re-written in red crayon by either her or one of her sisters. ("Given" 40). The loss of the authority of the original allows for a very intimate and active reading process with the immediate text.

Marlatt does, however, count on not only her own experience of the tale, but also the shared memory of her readers. She does not posit a universal or ideal language that resembles Benjamin's "pure language." Marlatt is interested, instead, in a search for language origin in the rhythm of the mother's body; but she does not imagine a universal form. However, Marlatt does explore the notion of the fairytale as myth, but how myth is realized through the reader's own memory. Thus, Marlatt plays with a central theme of *The Snow Queen*: memory as it relates to history and myth. The story in fragments, as it is presented in Marlatt's telling, forces the reader to piece together the story from his or her own memory. Thus, the reader, actively reading the prose/poem, creates a through line, which is to say, enacts her historical moment, out of shared, mythic, memory of the tale.

Marlatt shares with Andersen this interest in pulling personal experience up through myth. Marlatt says:" I was very concerned with [. . .] bringing out the mythical quality of [*Frames*], up thru my daily living, like a kind of bubbling up thru. It was the only thing that could make sense of my daily living" ("Given" 40). Marlatt began writing *Frames* when she was in Indiana. She says: "[this] was a revolution for me, because I couldnt write. I had not been able to write for that whole summer & all fall, & I had nothing to do. I had no immigrant visa, so I couldnt work, & we didnt have enough money for me to go to school, & I was stuck in the one-room apartment in Married Housing, & I was just going crazy, like really crazy" ("Given" 37). [sic]

In Andersen we see this intersection of history and myth in how *The Snow Queen* engages the ideals of the Enlightenment. Andersen's views on pure reason are most apparent in the following scene in which Kay attempts to assemble the ice chips in the Snow Queen's palace, the walls of which are made of "drifting now" and the window and doors of "razor-sharp wind." In the middle of "the endless, empty snow hall" is a frozen lake that is "cracked into thousands of pieces [. . .] each piece [. . .] exactly like all the others." The Snow Queen sits in the center of this lake she calls the "Mirror of Reason":

> Little Kai was quite blue with cold; in fact, he was almost black, yet he didn't notice because [The Snow Queen] had kissed the shivers out of him, and his heart was practically a lump of ice. He was dragging around several sharp, flat pieces of ice, which he placed in every imaginable way, trying to make a pattern of them [. . .]. It was the Ice Game of Reason [. . .]. He created whole shapes that formed

> words, but he never could figure out how to form the one word he was looking for, the word *eternity* . And the Snow Queen had said, "If you can create that shape for me, then you will be your own master, and I will give you the whole world and a pair of new skates." But he couldn't do it. (Nunnally 201)

Jackie Wullschlager in her biography on Andersen quotes W.H. Auden who says that the tale of the Snow Queen could never be a folk tale "'firstly because the human situation with which it is concerned is an historical one, created by Descartes, Newton and their successors, and secondly, because no folk tale would analyse its own symbol and explain that the game with the ice-splinters was a game of reason'" (255n). As well, Andersen's tales are usually considered to be rooted in the personal history of the writer: the Snow Queen was an image created by Andersen's father who cut her picture in the frost inside the window's frame; he said that she was his death coming for him (Wullschlager 253).

In Andersen's tale the theme of artistic vision is resolved in a Christian transcendentalism associated with sexual innocence and purity;[93] for Marlatt, however, Gerda's quest is metaphor for the ongoing creative process of working out the feminine in language that resists the Tale's absorption back into this dominant discourse. This situates Marlatt's figurative use of translation into the even more specialized sense it is given in feminist discourse, as defined by Barbara Godard in her essay "Theorizing Feminist Discourse/Translation": that is, translation as transformation, which understands translation to be not only a relationship between two languages, but also between two text systems—between dominant and marginal discourses. Translation, Godard tells us, is "a topos [. . .] used by women writers to evoke the difficulty of breaking out of silence in order to communicate new insights into women's experience and their relation to langugage" (Godard 89). We can see how this feminist understanding of translation extends what Benjamin proposes is the primary purpose of translation: Marlatt releases a new (if not pure) language that is under the spell of another. Translating becomes a process of production, not reproduction; and Andersen's original is seen, primarily, as the site of potential for this new language. In this formula, Marlatt, the writer-as-translator, is an active reader of the tale, and the work of the translator is put in the foreground, rather than made invisible: the ideal of conventional translation. The subject of the story can no longer be separated from how it is told, how it is translated. We see in Marlatt's writing the translator as "a person in the excitement of composition" (Bowering, "Vancouver as Postmodern Poetry" 84).

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[93] Andersen often uses the figures of little girls to work out the theme of artistic/sexual passion that is sublimated into a spiritual one: in "The Red Shoes" Karen learns Christian humility when her desire to dance in red shoes (a symbol of movement and female sexual promiscuity) results in dismemberment—the cutting off of her feet; in "The Little Mermaid" the Mermaid gives up her lovely voice in order to find the love of a human prince and worldly travel. Ultimately, she relinquishes her human passion in an act of Christian martyrdom. (She cannot make the prince love her, which would guarantee her mortality, nor does she kill the prince and thus gives up her chance to live as a mermaid again, that would allow her a potential spot in heaven.)

Frames/ Lost and Moving Bodies:

The meta-narrative theme of the movement of language (the flanerie of the text), or, as Bowering call it, "writing that understands language as the prime reality [. . .] language as the event" (Bowering "Given" 39), finds its narrative counterpart in the tension between the story of containment (the wife in the home) and the story of escape (Gerda's quest). The wife's immobility is emphasized by the recurring motif of the Photograph: Photographs are shown to be the manifestation of false memory (5); "unreal"

(26), in how they frame and compartmentalize, freeze a moment (again we think of Andersen's icy reason). Marlatt says of the domestic role: "*here's* the lie. Here where I sit waiting, forced, the/female, to abide. . ." (7).

Gerda, on the other hand, is the embodiment of the transgressive movement of the text, the desire in language. The wife says: "Gerda, you'd better believe it! I'm clinging to you [. . .]/ Gerda who wants/to climb out of windows to Kay's face she thinks she sees/ a moment/a speck on water/ floating/ LET ME COME TOO!" (*Frames* 11) Movement in, and the breaking up of, language is accompanied by a trust of the material body: Gerda rides the "rain dear" through a visibly impenetrable landscape of snow (the page, a blank movie screen?). Jung tells us that knowing and intuition are represented by the riding animal.[94] Gerda is one with her animal consort, who in the Andersen story, has a strong desire for home and an infallible memory: the moving physical body is the locale of home and memory in Marlatt's telling, as is invoked by the feel and image of her riding: "Only gruff midnight & the animal's head she hides behind, close to nothing else, his fur" (58).

The text repeatedly calls "Cut"; and as "the reel's un-/winding so fast frames are flying" Gerda "Hold[s] on! (to [the rain dear's] fur, to his real tangible hair)" (54). The cutting up of the text (the line, the Tale) coincides with the central action the story of Gerda—Gerda on the back of the reindeer on her way North to Kay—but also the story of the wife who wants to cut and run from her marriage. There is the hint of infidelity: "He walks off with them. Cut. She was with them & he walked off with her. Cut./cut? the slut.

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[94] Marlatt was reading Jung's analysis of fairytales at the time of writing *Frames* ("Given" 37); See*The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious (*New York: Princeton UP, 1980) 233.

Little monotonous voice goes on." (54). Therefore, in Marlatt's version, hope comes with the break from the marital wholeness that Andersen's insists one return to: a concept of "innocence" that Marlatt suggests is "A falsehood" (53). Marlatt's tale ends with the doors of the house "hang[ing] askew in their frames" unable to close. "'Too close to the railroad track? Or to the street?'" The wife steps over the hands of the old woman and steps out of the doorway (63). Andersen's Tale ends with Kay and Gerda's return home where together they sit "two-grownups, and yet they [are] children—children at heart" (Nunnally 204). The Grandmother sits by them and reads to them an old hymn from the bible that re-affirms the completion of their cyclical journey back to innocence and into domestic space, and its guarantee of an admittence into the "house" of heaven (Nunnally 204).

Like the marriage, the Grandmother's story (the religious framework) is another form of containment that must be broken. Marlatt's tale challenges the grandmother's story that is the framing narrative for both her's and Andersen's versions: "let me tell it" the voice of the wife says, answering her own question: "[w]ho tells it in-/side large tones of memory of the grandmother's ongoing voice? (Grand mutter of a psalm)" (13): Grandmother-of-us-all is what we hear. The Great Mother archetype refers to "an inward image at work in the human psyche." She is primordial, present in almost every mythology, and manifests herself as both good and terrible (Neumann 3). Marlatt takes from the Grand Mother's storytelling the "mutter" of myth, leaving behind the "psalm" of a religious history that represses feminine mobility. The voice of the wife says of her husband's grandmother: "she tries to expound/history to me (the men of your family, how they have all been alike), I promptly forget, having one eye on the clock" (25). However, as an alternative to the "bad" grandmother who repeats the same old story, there is the "good" grandmother who is the source of the sounds of words; she is "grand mutter" that is "a body of sound." and source for new forms of telling. For Marlatt, this "Mutter" of words privileges the poetic sense of words and their connections ("Musing" 10).

The housewife, and Marlatt, lacking any real role models, takes Gerda as their guide. Marlatt, literally trapped in her domestic role chooses storytelling as form of mobility, a way to be in the world, step out of the freeze-frame role that has been culturally ascribed to her. The flânerie of the text, then, becomes inseparable from real necessary freedom of mobily. Marlatt says about this time that "poetry was a matter of life & death" ("Given" 36). The sense of "just going" in writing implies a writing subject "immersed in "labour, life, language" all together (Nichols 116). This is a lonely quest. Marlatt reminds her interviewer that this was pre-women's liberation; she didn't have "an image of what else [she] could be" (42). Gerda, too, is alone in her journey towards identity. Andersen tells us "[t]he word 'alone' Gerda understood only too well" (247). The Finnish woman draws our attention to the fact that Gerda has walked a long way on bare feet; whereas Kay is tucked for "warmth" inside the Snow Queen's coat, Gerda is literally stripped of her clothing and the comforts of community; she also, like a flanuer, resists socialization at every point along the way.

Marlatt's own description of her linguistic flânerie resembles Gerda's rebellious movement: "Kay is lost, but Gerda's lost too. Every step of the way she's lost. She has no idea how it's going to end. She doesn't know how she's going to get from the place she starts out with her intention, which is of finding Kay & bringing him back to life—she has no idea how that will be accomplisht. Everything happens along the way (41). She says that her own attention to each word is like listening to a sound in the dark: "[y]ou have to go through it blindly.you have to move one foot in front of the other, one perception after another" ("Given" 41). She says it is: "literally step-by-step, word-by-word. Because that was the only way I could walk. I mean, if you're lost, the only reference point you have is yourself, right?" ("Given" 42).

Marlatt's tale confirms the suggestion of the paper, that the relationship between linguistic and social flânerie, language and the world is inseperable for the female flaneur flâneur. Marlatt's text takes this relationship to the extreme. Benjamin suggests the labyrinth's image "has become part of the flâneur's flesh and blood" (*The Writer* 166). The female flaneur makes the image of the labyrinth real, a textual city to traverse, just as she makes the myth real. Language the "prime reality" and she forges her own labyrinthine textual city to traverse. The poet, Erin Mouré says, "defies "real"-ity by writing it hard into the pages, building the surface (content), as form wherein she makes her defiance visibe. The female flâneur makes her own labyrinthe out of the text. "I grind down pencils to print the words I. WILL.MAKE.YOU.LOVE.ME. [. . .]As if will had anything to do with/love—black figure of my own pupil, gesticulating, climbs/out of a state of a stare in the glass" (*Frames* 17). As Marlatt's own lived experience shows, women, denied physical mobility in the world, make the text a material ground to traverse, and language as body. It comes from a desire to recognize oneself in the world as in the text, make oneself visible through language, guide one's body (the pre-linguistic) to language (consciousness): Gerda "kissed [Kay's] eyes and they became like hers" (Hauggard 260).

Conclusion: the Critic as Flâneur

The writing of this paper began with a moment of recognition that occurred when I picked up an English translation of Solvej Balle's *According to the Law* and read the first few line of the story "Tanja L.": "What Tanja L. knew of male anatomy, the nature of love and the laws governing the movement of bodies through space, she owed to the man who had just pulled back into the shadow of the Basle central station building" (Haveland 33). Here was Tanja L., as language, immediate, unadorned, removed and yet charged: a black figure cutting into the white of the page. I was excited by the surface of the page (that seemed easy to slip over) and drawn to the words that were mysterious and seemed isolated even from each other.

My experience of the text corresponded to the theme I always return to in writing: a solitary figure, preferably in a black coat, restlessly moving through an urban landscape. Before I had heard of the flaneur, or read Benjamin's or Baudelaire's writing, I knew the character of this figure. I had read J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*; Virgina Woolf's "A Room of One's Own"; Dostoevsky's "Notes From Underground"; stories which were marked by their own idiom, and by characters who think like they walk, are driven to walk in defiance of some system they are governed by but cannot thrive in. Each responds in the same way: with a return to the body and its immediate surroundings, the only locale that makes sense.

When I began to focus on reading contemporary Canadian women writers, this figure appeared again and again. In: Kristjana Gunnars' *Night Train to Nykøbing* (1998); Aritha van Herk's *Restlessness*; (1998); Dionne Brand's *A Map to the Door of No Return* (2001) to name three of many. Wandering women characters compared their identities to train stations, hotels: sites of anonymity and transience that undermine the cliché metonym of woman as the hearth and home. The opening line of van Herk's novel, "I AM ALONE in a room with the man who has agreed to kill me," immediately yields to the narrator's pleasure in the sensual detailing of everything in her hotel room: "the walls papered with some elegant stripe [. .] a bathtub deep if a bit scratched. And against the closet door is a metal fold-out suitcase stand"(7); Gunnars' narrator has the audacity to privilege the mentioning of a window display of corner boutique in the center of Oslo, or a hair salon on Whyte Ave. Edmonton. We note the resonance that the insignificant and arbitrary detail has in the text, simply because it has been selected and is written down. Brand weaves her discursive history about Desire in the Black Diaspora together with anecdotes that focus on the writing subject completely possessed by a desire for the immediate image:

> [s]ome years ago a young man surely on his own way to ruin stepped into the street on a square in Amsterdam. The night just approaching, I watched him from a distance well into the night. His figure was in anguish and discomfort; it jangled; it wanted to be and not to be in the square. He was in a kind of despair I have never experienced and experienced only then through his drifting into the street [. . .] His drifting into the street, his slight hesitation—this was beauty. I saw that young man drop into the square like a drop of water into an ocean. That is, I saw his body, his back half-turned toward me, his right leg hovering before stepping off the curb. My eyes followed his yellow-clad body—or so it seemed to be yellow in that dark street. The square had a way of darkening with secrets, so the light was yellow, his figure was yellow. That was beauty, his anguish was

> beauty—his leg stopping, his face whipping round in search of someone, yet his disinterest somehow in people, the glaze to his eyes, yet their sharpness in seeking out the thing, the someone he was after—all was beauty. He was someone in his own gesture, the thing that writers envy (194).

This passage is one of the most beautiful and identifiable passages of flânerie I have come across. That the writer in Brand's text, who identifies herself as a Canadian lesbian of Black Caribbean origin, is also so evocative of both Baudelaire's and Poe's flâneur, did away with any doubt that a female flâneur exists. The question then became for me, but how does she exist? How could Brand, who talks about how the Black body as a colonized space, engage Baudelaire's aesthetics of allegory where a real body in pain is made into a beautiful image by the writer? When I thought more about the women fiction writers I had been reading, I began to notice a critical engagement of writing present in the narrative: van Herk's narrator's is paid to deliver mysterious packages. Incessant travel around the world has emptied words of their meaning; seperated, language from its objects: "Portmanteau could be the name of a perfume, a book, even an hourglass." Movement without rest is what has led her to hire a man to kill her. Gunnars' self-reflexive writing gestures are more apparent: her narrator's accounts of travels to and around various cities in Europe and Canada are accompanied by her reading (to the reader) excerpts from the books she presumably has with her: Clarise Lispector, Hermann Hesse, Italo Calvino. Her own travel calls up what fragments from other writings need to be included.

Alternatively, we see in the figurative language of the feminist theory and poetics of Canadian writers, heavily influenced by the New French Feminists, a story of women's walking. Gail Scott in her volume of essays *Spaces Like Stairs*, much like Baudelaire did in his essay "The Painter of Modern Life," writes her poetics through the anecdotal stories of urban street life; the poet appears as female flâneur:

> SITTING AT A CAFÉ table, in a park, on a bus, the notes I take that will later become prose. . .the sound of poetry. So why must they become sentences become narrative? Why must I get involved with this forward movement of time the novel seems to require, when the voice of the notes, the woman's voice beckons towards poetry?" (*Spaces* 79);

or the lesbian, Québécois poet utilizes the motif of the bag lady to trouble the identity of the heroine:

> The fork in her road possibly leading two different ways: the heterosexual, consumed by her love for the male; or the free woman, possibly lesbian? Is the work of the novel to choose? Or is it to follow the thread of obsession, wherever it goes? What if her inability to choose results in her becoming like the grey woman, a stunning 'baglady' who gets more and more integrated into the tapestry of the city./ If this character ends up as part of the tapestry, in other words not unary, neatly resolved, she will gragment the novel form!" (*Spaces* 83).

Looking at the fiction that is influenced by these poetics, Scott's *My Paris*, or Daphne Marlatt's fiction for example, we see writing that refuses to separate fiction from theory. I returned to thinking about the Danish women writers I had read, who were using the motif of the wandering urban women in prose that seemed experimental to me: that is, working inside and against the dominant styles of their writing time. There was an insistence in the writing that troubled the reading of Thorup's *Baby* only within the frameworks of Psychological and Social Realsim, and Balle's *According to the Law* in the context of the 1990's trend in, Scandinavian art, to engage the natural sciences and the biological condition.[95] To explore whatever this excess was, I wanted to look at their works alongside of the feminist ficto-criticism of the Canadian women writers I knew, which led me to Marlatt's work that exemplifies the relationship of experimental form to the theme of wandering, in the retelling of a well established Danish fairytale.

I knew that I couldn't approach the Danish work with a comprehensive historical, theoretical and literary understanding of that nation's literature, nor did I want to "fence in" either national literature in order to make a comparison. I came to the Danish work while I was living in Denmark as a foreigner. Therefore, I wanted to develop a poetics that constructed the reader, and the writer of this thesis, as an international flâneur whose reading/writing body becomes the contact zone for the two literatures, and allows intersecting texts spontaneous and productive associations and new meanings. This process follows that of the modernist writer Charles Olson (who figures in this thesis) who made the body a "threshing floor": "[this kind of writer] is less interested to study ideas from past times for their own sake, more for the sake of intimations they bring into his mind, stimulating his *ideas* [sic.]. One collects curious objects in order to transform with their presence other objects already in the room." (Tallman, "Wonder Merchants" 178). This notion of the collector resembles Walter Benjamin's: "But this is the way things are for the great collector. They strike him. How he himself pursues and encounters [objects], what changes in the ensemble of items are effected by a newly supervening item—all this shows him his affairs in constant flux" (*The Arcades Project*

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[95] Thomas Fechner-Smarsly "Entropic Desires" 263.

[H1a,5] 205) . While emphasizing the reader's and writer's experience of language, I have tried to avoid an essentialist and humanist position: the flâneur is a marginal and indeterminate figure that has always served as a trope for the changing relationship between reader, writer, and text.

I began work on this essay, not only because of my affection for the female flâneur, but also because of the lack of critical work published in English on Contemporary Danish Literature. This is surprising considering the mutual cultural interest these countries have for each other, and the amount of effort Denmark puts into showcasing its art to the world: in the Fall of 2004 Toronto organized a city wide exhibition of Danish art and culture in conjunction with the Toronto International Festival of Authors;[96] it was the first ever international celebration of contemporary Danish culture, and showcased mostly non-mainstream artists. In Denmark, three major universities (in Odense, Copenhagen, and Aarhus) have programs in Canadian studies that offer courses on formally innovative authors. Aarhus University houses exceptional, rare, small press collections of Canadian Literature. Yet, most of what has been written about Danish writing in English is meant to be a general survey and introduction—or else deals with historical work. My own travels to Denmark in 1995, however, led to surprising encounters, to contemporary Danish women's writing that demands a close language-centred reading, and presents female heroes who are figures of textual, and conceptual, resistance and revolution.

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[96] SuperDanish: Newfangled Danish Culture. www.harbourfrontcentre.com/superdanish

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